

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 569

CE 069 812

TITLE National Service Programs. AmeriCorps\*USA--Early Program Resource and Benefit Information. Report to Congressional Requesters.

INSTITUTION General Accounting Office, Washington, DC. Health, Education, and Human Services Div.

REPORT NO GAO/HEHS-95-222

PUB DATE Aug 95

NOTE 73p.

AVAILABLE FROM U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015 (first copy free; additional copies \$2 each; 10% or more: 25% discount).

PUB TYPE Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; \*Federal Aid; Federal Legislation; \*Financial Support; Higher Education; \*National Programs; Program Costs; Program Implementation; \*Public Service; Resources

IDENTIFIERS \*AmeriCorps; \*National Service

## ABSTRACT

A study examined the amount of public and private resources currently being used to support the Corporation for National and Community Services' AmeriCorps\*USA program. Information was collected through meetings with corporation officials; examination of legislation establishing the Corporation and national service programs; review of corporation policies, guidance, reports, and program evaluation plans; and review of files for all grantees' programs. Information was also collected from a random sample of 80 nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA grantees and from all 13 federal agencies that were grantees. Seven programs in Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington were visited. Findings indicated that over one-third of financial resources available for grantees' programs came from sources outside the corporation, mostly from other federal agencies and state and local governments. Resources available per participant were lower for programs run by nonfederal organizations than those funded by federal agencies. The review of activities at the sites visited indicated a variety of results had been achieved that support AmeriCorps\*USA goals. The projects had been designed to strengthen communities, develop civic responsibility, and expand educational opportunities for program participants and others. (Appendixes include methodological and data collection issues, detailed results of resource analysis, sampling error and sensitivity analysis results, federal agency program and resource availability information, information gathered from site visits, and comments from the corporation.) (YLB)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

GAO

United States General Accounting Office

Report to Congressional Requesters

August 1995

# NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

## AmeriCorps\*USA— Early Program Resource and Benefit Information

ED 386 569



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to  
improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this  
document do not necessarily represent  
official OERI position or policy

GAO/HEHS-95-222

ERIC  
Full Text Provided by ERIC

Health, Education, and  
Human Services Division

B-260739

August 29, 1995

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senate

With the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-82), the Congress created the largest national and community service program since the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. This program, commonly known as AmeriCorps,<sup>1</sup> is administered by a new federal Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation) that combined two independent agencies—the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION. For AmeriCorps\*USA grants and national service education awards, the Corporation's budget was about \$249 million in fiscal year 1994, and the administration has requested about \$619 million for fiscal year 1996. In congressional testimony, the Corporation estimated AmeriCorps\*USA's cost per participant at \$18,800 for 1995 operations.<sup>2</sup> The Corporation did not include contributions that AmeriCorps\*USA grantees receive from other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private sources. Not knowing the total resource commitment currently supporting AmeriCorps\*USA programs led to concern on the part of some members of Congress about authorizing significantly higher program appropriations.

Because of this concern, you asked us to provide information on the public and private resources currently being used to support the Corporation's AmeriCorps\*USA program.<sup>3</sup> In addition, you asked us to express those resources on a per-participant and per-service-hour basis, considering the program's different resource streams. Because most programs will not complete an entire operating year before September 1995, we agreed to report on the amount of funds and in-kind contributions available for expenditure to support AmeriCorps\*USA participants. In the absence of actual cost data, this information may be indicative of the level of federal and other resources that ultimately will

<sup>1</sup>AmeriCorps consists of three programs: AmeriCorps\*USA, which is the largest; AmeriCorps\*VISTA; and AmeriCorps\*NCCC. This report pertains only to the AmeriCorps\*USA program.

<sup>2</sup>Statement by Eli J. Segal, chief executive officer, Corporation for National and Community Service, before the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies (Mar. 24, 1995). In other forums, the Corporation has given estimates that ranged from about \$9,000 to \$14,000 per participant.

<sup>3</sup>"Resources" in this report refers to both cash and in-kind contributions being used to operate AmeriCorps\*USA programs. "Funds" refers only to cash contributions, while "the Corporation's appropriations" refers to appropriations by the Congress to support AmeriCorps\*USA programs.

support AmeriCorps\*USA participants each year. Finally, you asked us to provide information on AmeriCorps\*USA's program objectives and anticipated benefits along with examples of achievements to date.

In developing our information on resources available for the AmeriCorps\*USA program, we identified both the amount and source of funding devoted to supporting AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' programs for program year 1994-95.<sup>4</sup> As a first step, we held extensive meetings with Corporation officials; examined legislation establishing the Corporation and national service programs; and reviewed Corporation program policies, guidance, and reports as well as its program evaluation plans.

At the Corporation, we reviewed grant files for all grantees' programs the Corporation told us received fiscal year 1994 appropriations. Each file typically included the application submitted by the AmeriCorps\*USA grantee, the amount of the grant award, and matching contributions proposed and budgeted by the grantee. The Corporation grant files, however, did not contain information on the source of these matching contributions. To obtain detailed information on matching contributions, we constructed a random sample of 80 nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA grantees. For each program in our sample, we collected information as of May 1995 from project administrators on the amounts, sources, and types of resources—cash versus in-kind contributions—obtained or certain to be received by the end of the program year to match Corporation grant funds.<sup>5</sup> In addition, we collected information on the number of currently enrolled participants and the number of additional participants the grantees expected to enroll before the end of the first program year. The data we received were self-reported by program officials and not independently verified with other sources. We used this information to project the amount and source of resources available and the number of participants involved in AmeriCorps\*USA programs nationwide. Our sample was drawn to make the results statistically representative of the 284 grantee programs administered by nonprofit, state, and local organizations. At the 95-percent confidence level, our estimates have a sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Because of the small number of federal sponsors, we collected resource information from all 13 federal agencies that were grantees. We met with

<sup>4</sup>The program year began and will end at different times for different sites, and it may be more or less than 12 months.

<sup>5</sup>Although we excluded in-kind contributions donated by the private sector from our per-participant and per-service-hour calculations, we did include them in estimates of total resources available.

agency officials and obtained information on the amounts, sources, and types of funding and in-kind contributions used to support their programs and the number of participants enrolled and expected to be enrolled.

Finally, we visited seven judgmentally selected AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' programs in Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington. These programs represented a mix of grantee characteristics, such as mission and scale, and our visits provided insight into program operations, actual sources of funds, and program benefits.

Appendix I provides a more detailed description of the methodology we used to obtain and analyze funding information, along with data and analysis limitations. We performed our work between January and July 1995 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

## Results in Brief

For program year 1994-95, our estimate of Corporation resources available per participant was about \$17,600, slightly less than the Corporation's March 24th estimate. Using our methodology, total resources available for AmeriCorps\*USA programs included more than the Corporation's appropriations. Over one-third of the financial resources available for AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' programs came from sources outside the Corporation, mostly from other federal agencies and state and local governments. Total resources available per AmeriCorps\*USA participant averaged \$26,654, of which about \$17,600 came from the Corporation, \$3,200 from non-Corporation federal sources, and \$4,000 from state and local governments. The remaining amount, roughly \$1,800, came from the private sector. Resources available per participant were lower for programs run by nonfederal organizations than those funded by federal agencies. Total resources available to AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' programs equaled about \$16 per service hour.

In terms of benefits, our review of activities at the seven programs' sites visited indicated that a variety of results have been achieved that support AmeriCorps\*USA's goals. The legislation intended grantees' programs to help communities address unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs. At the grantees' sites we visited, we found that the projects had been designed to strengthen communities, develop civic responsibility, and expand educational opportunities for program participants and others.

## Background

Under the act that created it, the Corporation has a diverse set of responsibilities. These responsibilities include administering national service programs authorized under previous legislation,<sup>6</sup> funding training and service clearinghouses, and undertaking activities related to disaster relief. In addition, the Corporation administers the national service trust, which pays for national service education awards under the statute. For fiscal year 1994, the Congress appropriated \$370 million for the Corporation plus \$207 million for programs under the former ACTION agency that the Corporation now administers.

## The AmeriCorps\*USA Program

AmeriCorps\*USA allows participants to earn education awards to help pay for postsecondary education in exchange for performing community service that matches priorities established by the Corporation. Participants earn an education award of \$4,725 for full-time service or half of that amount for part-time service. A minimum of 1,700 hours of service within a year is required to earn the full \$4,725 award. The Corporation requires that programs devote some portion, but no more than 20 percent, of participants' service hours to nondirect service activities, such as training or studying for the equivalent of a high school diploma. To earn a part-time award, a participant must perform 900 hours of community service within 2 years (or within 3 years in the case of participants who are full-time college students). Individuals can serve more than two terms; however, they can only receive two education awards. The awards, which are held in trust by the U.S. Treasury, are paid directly to qualified postsecondary institutions or student loan lenders and must be used within 7 years after service is completed.

In addition to the education award, AmeriCorps\*USA participants receive a living allowance stipend that is at least equivalent to, but no more than double, the average annual living allowance received by VISTA volunteers—about \$7,640 for full-time participants in fiscal year 1994. Additional participant benefits include health insurance and child care assistance for participants who need them.

Individuals can join a national service program before, during, or after postsecondary education. A participant must be 16 or older and be a

<sup>6</sup>These programs include Serve-America (which authorizes grants for education service projects for elementary through postsecondary education), the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) (which utilizes former military personnel and unused military sites for residential youth programs), Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) (a domestic version of the Peace Corps), the Youth Conservation Corps (which provides teenagers with opportunities to perform conservation work), and older American volunteer programs (which provide service opportunities for retired and senior Americans).



citizen, a national, or a lawful permanent resident of the United States. A participant must also be a high school graduate, agree to earn the equivalent of a high school diploma before receiving an education award, or be granted a waiver by the program. Selection of participants is not based on financial need. In its fiscal year 1994 appropriations, the Corporation anticipated fielding about 18,350 full- and part-time AmeriCorps\*USA participants.

## AmeriCorps\*USA Grantees

The Corporation awarded about \$149 million of its fiscal year 1994 appropriations to make about 300 grants to nonprofit organizations and federal, state, and local government agencies to operate AmeriCorps\*USA programs.<sup>7</sup> About two-thirds of the grant dollars were awarded through state commissions on national service set up by the 1993 act to provide oversight to state programs. The remaining one-third of the AmeriCorps\*USA grant monies was awarded directly by the Corporation to national nonprofit organizations and federal agencies. Grantees were to be selected on the basis of their proposed national service programs' quality, innovation, and sustainability. Sustainability was evaluated on the basis of community support for a program and a grantee's ability to raise other funds from multiple sources, including the private sector.

Grant recipients use grant funds to pay up to 85 percent of the cost of participants' living allowances and benefits (up to 100 percent of child care expenses) and up to 75 percent of other program costs, including participant training, education, and uniforms; staff salaries, travel, transportation, supplies, and equipment; and program evaluation and administrative costs. Grants are based in part on the number of participants the program estimates it will enroll during the year. If participants leave the program during the year, the Corporation may either allow the program to redirect participant stipend and benefit funds to other program expenses or take back any unused portion of the grant. To ensure that federal Corporation dollars are used to leverage other resources for program support, grantees must also obtain support from non-Corporation sources to help pay for the program. This support, which can be cash or in-kind contributions, may come from other federal sources as well as state and local governments, and private sources. In-kind contributions include personnel to manage AmeriCorps\*USA programs as well as to supervise and train participants; office facilities and supplies;

<sup>7</sup>These grants are known as operating grants. The Corporation also awards planning grants, which are given to organizations to plan future year programs but do not fund current operations.

and materials and equipment needed in the course of conducting national service projects.

Consistent with the legislation, federal agencies can receive grants to support AmeriCorps\*USA volunteers who perform work furthering the agencies' missions. Federal agency grantees are to use their own resources in addition to the Corporation grant to integrate national service more fully into their mission work. Furthermore, as is the case with nonfederal agency programs, Corporation regulations state that federal agencies are ultimately intended to support their service initiatives without Corporation resources.

## AmeriCorps\*USA Primarily Supported by Public Resources

In its first program year, AmeriCorps\*USA relied heavily on public support. The Corporation's appropriations accounted for slightly less than two-thirds of resources available for AmeriCorps\*USA grantees. When Corporation appropriations were combined with resources from other federal agencies and state and local governments, the public sector provided about 88 percent of the \$351 million in total program resources available. Federal resources accounted for 74 percent (about \$260 million), while state and local government contributions made up 14 percent (\$50 million). Private cash and in-kind contributions constituted the smallest share of resources, amounting to about 12 percent (or about \$41 million).

Most of the Corporation's funding for AmeriCorps\*USA projects went to providing operating grants and education awards. Of the Corporation's funding, 61 percent financed operating grants. Slightly over one-quarter supported participants' education awards, while the remainder went toward Corporation program management and administration.

Most of the matching contributions AmeriCorps\*USA programs have received came from public as opposed to private sources. About 69 percent of all matching resources came from either a federal or a state or local government source, with the split between cash and in-kind contributions being about 43 percent (about \$57 million) and 26 percent (about \$34 million), respectively. The remaining 31 percent of matching resources were from private sources, with cash and in-kind contributions accounting for 17 percent (about \$23 million) and 14 percent (about \$18 million), respectively.



In calculating resources available on a per-participant and per-service-hour basis (see table 1), we found that average resources available from all sources per AmeriCorps\*USA participant amounted to about \$26,654 (excluding in-kind contributions from private sources). This amounted to about \$16 per service hour or about \$20 per direct service hour, assuming 20 percent of the 1,700 hours of total service was nondirect service time.<sup>8</sup> Although these figures represent resources available for all program expenses, they are not the equivalent of annual salaries or hourly wages for participants. See appendix II for more detailed results and appendix III for sampling error and sensitivity analysis results.

**Table 1: Per-Participant and Per-Service-Hour Resources Available for AmeriCorps\*USA, by Source**

Source of contribution	Resources available		
	Per FTE	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>			
Resources	\$17,629	\$10.37	\$12.96
<b>Other federal</b>			
Cash	2,247	1.32	1.65
In-kind	930	0.55	0.68
<b>State and local government<sup>a</sup></b>			
Cash	2,272	1.34	1.67
In-kind	1,756	1.03	1.29
<b>Private</b>			
Cash	1,819	1.07	1.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$26,654</b>	<b>\$15.68</b>	<b>\$19.60</b>

Notes: Items may not sum to totals because of rounding.

We calculated available resources per participant on a full-time-equivalent (FTE) basis

<sup>a</sup>State and local contributors included state and city departments, such as police forces and school systems, and public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions.

It is important not to equate our funding information with cost data. Because most AmeriCorps\*USA programs are still in their first year of operations, actual cost cannot yet be determined. Funding and in-kind contributions from sources other than the Corporation were reported to us in May 1995 as resources already received or those that program

<sup>8</sup>In establishing the national service program, the Congress intended that participants engage in activities that benefit communities (direct service) and the program participants themselves (nondirect service). Direct service activities include those that address unmet human, educational, environmental, or public safety needs. Nondirect service activities include training participants to carry out national service projects and assisting them in making the transition to other educational and career opportunities after they complete national service.

directors were certain of receiving by the end of their current operating year. Therefore, actual resource and expenditure levels may prove to be higher or lower than indicated by the estimates reported to us.

During the course of our review, Corporation officials expressed several concerns about our calculations. First, they believed our estimate should be adjusted to reflect start-up costs incurred in the first program year. The Corporation's position was that because AmeriCorps\*USA programs incur initial-year start-up costs that will not recur in the future, first-year costs will be overstated unless start-up costs are capitalized over several years.

We did not attempt to systematically identify start-up costs since we focused on resource availability and not cost data. Moreover, during our site visits, we saw little evidence of start-up costs so high that, unless capitalized, they would cause a significant distortion. Most start-up costs consisted of intangible items, such as curricula development and program planning, rather than conventional capital acquisitions like buildings and machinery.

Second, Corporation officials said it is likely that not all education award money will be used. Thus, they believed our estimate for education award funding may be overstated. However, we found no reliable data or basis to make such an estimate to adjust our per-participant estimates. We have included the full value of the awards in our calculations because the Congress appropriates funds specifically for these awards and the funds are held in trust and available to those who earn them for 7 years. Moreover, our methodology is identical to the way the Corporation calculates its own cost estimates.

Third, Corporation officials believed our per-hour calculations are overstated. The Corporation believes participants will complete substantially more than the 1,700 service hours required by law. As support, they provided us information on participants serving in the VISTA program and preliminary figures about some participants who have completed their AmeriCorps\*USA service. We used the 1,700 figure because this is the minimum established by law, and program participants are required to only attain, not exceed, it. Also, from discussions with officials at the seven programs visited, we found that while some participants might exceed these hours, many others would have difficulty meeting the requirement. This is particularly true in programs that started later in the year than expected. In addition, we do not consider the VISTA participant data appropriate because VISTA is a different type of program,

with participation requirements and target populations that differ from AmeriCorps\*USA's.<sup>9</sup> The data the Corporation provided on AmeriCorps\*USA participants was based on about 1,000 of an estimated 18,350 current AmeriCorps\*USA participants, or about 5 percent. These participants may not be representative of those still serving.

The Corporation also believes participants will spend substantially less than 20 percent of their service hours on nondirect service activities. In calculating resources per direct service hour, we used 80 percent of the total 1,760 hours (or 1,360 hours) as the basis for estimating direct service. While we recognize that the Corporation's regulations make 20 percent the maximum amount of service time that may be spent on training, programs we visited appeared likely to use the full 20 percent for training. In addition, because programs have not all completed their first year, the Corporation could not provide us with data on the portion of time spent on nondirect service.

## Federal Agency Programs Are Most Resource Intensive

We found significant differences in levels of resources available for nonfederal versus federal programs (see table 2). On average, AmeriCorps\*USA programs operated by nonprofit, state, and local agencies received about \$25,800 in cash and in-kind contributions per participant. In contrast, programs sponsored by federal agencies received about \$31,000 in cash and in-kind contributions per participant—about 20 percent more than programs administered by nonfederal grantees. In addition, federal agencies relied far more on non-Corporation federal resources than their counterparts. On average, federal agency grantees had about \$15,500 in cash and in-kind contributions available per participant from federal sources other than the Corporation. Non-Corporation federal<sup>1</sup> funds accounted for about 50 percent of total resources available to federal grantees.<sup>10</sup> Nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA grantees received resources of less than \$800 per participant from non-Corporation federal sources, or about 3 percent of their total resources. For more detailed resource information and a description of AmeriCorps\*USA programs sponsored by federal agencies, see appendix IV.

<sup>9</sup>For example, VISTA volunteers specifically work to combat poverty-associated problems. They must live among and at the economic level of the low-income clients they serve. And at the time the data were collected—1992 and 1993—an education award was not available for VISTA volunteers upon completion of their service.

<sup>10</sup>Almost all of the non-Corporation federal cash and in-kind contributions came from the sponsoring federal agencies themselves.

**Table 2: Comparison of Resources Available for Nonfederal and Federal AmeriCorps\*USA Programs**

Source of contribution	Nonfederal program resources	Federal program resources	All program resources
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>			
Resources	\$18,602	\$12,665	\$17,629
<b>Other federal</b>			
Cash	493	11,187	2,247
In-kind	261	4,338	930
<b>State and local government</b>			
Cash	2,607	564	2,272
In-kind	1,880	1,126	1,756
<b>Private</b>			
Cash	1,953	1,136	1,819
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,797</b>	<b>\$31,017</b>	<b>\$26,654</b>

Note: Items may not sum to totals because of rounding.

## Program Accomplishments Support the Varied Goals of AmeriCorps\*USA

In its mission statement, the Corporation had identified several objectives that spanned a wide range of accomplishments, from very tangible results to those much harder to quantify. During our site visits, we observed local programs helping communities. AmeriCorps\*USA has also sponsored an evaluation of its own that summarized results at a sample of programs during their first 5 months of operation and identified diverse achievements related to each service area.<sup>11</sup>

## Meeting Unmet Needs

One of AmeriCorps\*USA's objectives was to help the nation meet its unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs, or as the Corporation states it, "getting things done." Our visits to programs also identified diverse achievements. We observed participants renovating inner-city housing, assisting teachers in elementary schools, maintaining and reestablishing native vegetation in a flood control area, analyzing neighborhood crime statistics to better target prevention measures, and developing a program in a community food bank for people with special dietary needs. Officials at the sponsoring organizations spoke of being able to accomplish tasks that their limited resources had previously prevented them from accomplishing.

<sup>11</sup>Aguirre International, AmeriCorps\*USA at Five Months (Rosslyn, Va., Mar. 22, 1995)

## Strengthening Communities

AmeriCorps\*USA's legislation identified renewing the spirit of community as an objective, and the program's mission includes "strengthening the ties that bind us together as a people." We observed several projects focused on rebuilding communities. For example, a multifamily house being renovated was formerly a congregating spot for drug dealers. Program officials believe that after completion, it will encourage other neighborhood improvements. Another team built a community farm market and renovated a municipal stadium, both of which a town official stated will continue to provide economic and social benefits to the community.

Another way to meet this objective was to have participants with diverse backgrounds working together. Participants of several programs we visited spanned a wide age range, from teenagers to retirees. Teams also showed diversity in educational, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Participants said that a valuable aspect of the program was working with others with different backgrounds and benefiting from their strengths.

## Fostering Responsibility

Another of AmeriCorps\*USA's program objectives was to foster civic responsibility. We saw evidence of this at programs such as one where participants devoted half of each Friday to working on community service projects they devise and carry out independently. Participants at another program, in which they organized meetings to establish relationships between at-risk youth and elderly people, commented that this work had taught them how to organize programs, experience they believed would be helpful as they took on roles in their communities. Training periods included conflict resolution techniques and team-building skills.

## Expanding Opportunities

Both the AmeriCorps legislation and the Corporation's mission identified expanding opportunities as an objective. In practice, individuals who participate in national service have their educational opportunities expanded by the education awards, which help them pursue higher education or job training. At the sites we visited, participants indicated that the education award was an important part of their decision to participate in AmeriCorps\*USA.

Programs also supported participants in obtaining high school degrees or the equivalent. According to Corporation regulations, a full-time participant who does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent generally must agree to earn one or the other before using the education

award. In one program, a general equivalency diploma (GED) candidate was receiving classroom instruction and individual tutoring. She had recently passed the preliminary GED test after failing the GED test five times. After doing some extra preparation for the math portion, she will take the actual GED test again. A larger program that recruited at-risk youth, most of whom do not have high school degrees, provided classroom instruction related to the service that participants performed, such as a construction-based math curriculum. Program officials said most of the participants are enrolled in high school equivalency courses and that at least five have already passed the GED test.

We also saw programs that offer participants the chance to get postsecondary academic credit. One such program, affiliated with a private college, offered participants the option of pursuing an environmental studies curriculum through which they can earn up to six upper-level credits at a reduced tuition. Half of the participants have chosen to do so. A second program allowed participants to earn 36 credit hours toward an associate's degree in the natural sciences through their service, which can lead to state certification as an environmental restoration technician.

In addition to formal education opportunities, some participants said they were attracted to AmeriCorps\*USA programs because the programs provide service in specific fields. We spoke with several participants who wanted experience in those fields to improve their skills and expand their opportunities. For example, a community policing program attracted 15 participants who are pursuing law enforcement careers. Similarly, in a youth conservation corps program in which most participants have environmental science degrees, many participants sought practical experience to complement their formal education.

For more detailed results from our site visits, see appendix V.

## Agency Comments

In commenting on a draft of this report, the Corporation agreed with the amount we reported as federal (Corporation and non-Corporation) cash resources made available to AmeriCorps\*USA programs. However, the Corporation took exception to our including anything other than federal cash resources in determining total resources available to these programs. Other program resources we included were in-kind resources provided by federal agencies and cash and in-kind resources provided by state and local governments as well as by private contributors. The Corporation also



disagreed with the methodology we employed to develop and report on total available resources per participant and per service hour. The Corporation believed we should have excluded resources other than federal cash from our calculations because these resources were not a burden to the federal taxpayer, AmeriCorps\*USA programs were legally required to obtain these resources, and these resources should have been considered benefits rather than costs.

As we have clearly noted in our report, our objective was not to determine whether AmeriCorps\*USA was cost-effective. We drew no conclusions about the cost of the program, the value of program benefits, or whether the program was meeting its objectives. Contrary to the Corporation's view, we believed that ignoring significant amounts of AmeriCorps\*USA program resources would undermine the importance that these resources play in fielding AmeriCorps\*USA participants. In our view, an accounting of the total resources available to support an AmeriCorps\*USA participant provides a useful perspective on the program. This report presents the only information available to date on total resources available to AmeriCorps\*USA programs nationwide and captures this information by resource stream—that is, by federal, state and local, and private sources. Knowing the total resources available to the program is critical information for decisionmakers. In addition, such information can demonstrate the degree of partnership between the public (federal, state, and local government) and private sectors.

The Corporation's comments, and our assessment of these comments, appear in appendix VI. In addition to these comments, the Corporation provided us with technical comments, which we have incorporated into the report where appropriate.

---

We are providing copies of this report to the appropriate House and Senate committees and other interested parties. Please call me at (202) 512-7014 or Wayne B. Upshaw, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-7006 if you or your staff have any questions. Other GAO contacts and contributors to this report are listed in appendix VII.



Linda G. Morra  
Director, Education and Employment Issues

# Contents

Letter	1
Appendix I	20
Methodological and Data Collection Issues	20
Collecting Program Resource and Participant Data	20
Analyzing the Data	21
Corporation Administrative Cost Data	21
Education Awards Cost	22
Combining Information From All Sources	22
Appendix II	23
Detailed Results of Resource Analysis	
Appendix III	24
Sampling Error and Sensitivity Analysis Results	24
Sampling Error	24
Sensitivity of Our Results to Changes in Certain Key Assumptions	24
Appendix IV	28
Federal Agency Program and Resource Availability Information	28
Overview of Federal Agency Programs	28
Detailed Information on 15 Federal Agency Programs	31
Appendix V	38
Information Gathered From Site Visits	38
AmeriCorps Maryland Community Assisting Police	38
AmeriCorps Health and Housing Fellows	40
MAGIC ME	42
Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps	45
Washington (State) Conservation Corps	46
Washington (State) Service Corps	48
YouthBuild Boston	50
Youth Corps - National Service Academy	52

Appendix VI Comments From the Corporation for National and Community Service	55
Appendix VII GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments	71
Tables	
Table 1: Per-Participant and Per-Service-Hour Resources Available for AmeriCorps*USA, by Source	7
Table 2: Comparison of Resources Available for Nonfederal and Federal AmeriCorps*USA Programs	10
Table III.1: Estimated Resources Per Participant and Associated Bounds of 95-Percent Confidence Interval	24
Table III.2: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Returned Corporation Funds	25
Table III.3: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Treatment of Public University Contributions	25
Table III.4: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Treatment of In-Kind Contributions	26
Table IV.1: Resources Available for AmeriCorps*USA Programs Sponsored by Federal Agencies	30
Table V.1: Estimated Program Resources for AmeriCorps Maryland Community Assisting Police	39
Table V.2: Estimated Program Resources for AmeriCorps Health and Housing Fellows	41
Table V.3: Estimated Program Resources for MAGIC ME	43
Table V.4: Estimated Program Resources for Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps	45
Table V.5: Estimated Program Resources for Washington Conservation Corps	47
Table V.6: Estimated Program Resources for Washington Service Corps	49
Table V.7: Estimated Program Resources for YouthBuild Boston	51

---

Table V.8: Estimated Program Resources for Youth Corps - National Service Academy	53
--	----

---

**Abbreviations**

ADD	Administration on Developmental Disabilities
CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FTE	full-time equivalent
GED	general equivalency diploma
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
NCCC	National Civilian Community Corps
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity (Vermont)
SCC	Seaborne Conservation Corps
USDA	Department of Agriculture
VISTA	Volunteers in Service to America
YFC	Youth Fair Chance

# Methodological and Data Collection Issues

To obtain resource and participant information, we surveyed a random sample of nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA grantees and gathered data on all federal grantees. We asked these grantees to detail their sources and amounts of available program resources and number of participants. To estimate program totals, we projected data from the nonfederal grantee sample to the universe of nonfederal grantees and combined them with federal grantee data.

## Collecting Program Resource and Participant Data

Because nonfederal programs were so numerous, we collected information from a sample of 80 nonfederal programs. Our sample was randomly selected from the 284 nonfederal programs identified by reviewing Corporation files. We received responses from 75 of the 80 programs that we surveyed.<sup>12</sup> We obtained data from them on the sources of their available resources, asking them to include all resources “devoted specifically to your AmeriCorps program” received “for use during your program’s initial funding period.” We also asked them for information on the number of (1) full-time and part-time AmeriCorps\*USA participants who were currently enrolled or had successfully completed service requirements and (2) additional full- and part-time participants expected to enroll before the end of the initial funding period. We summed these to reflect the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) participants who are likely to eventually meet service requirements this year.

We also gathered the same data—resources available and numbers of participants—from the 13 federal agencies administering AmeriCorps\*USA programs.<sup>13</sup> One agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, operated 3 separate programs, so our information covered 15 programs.

Since programs are only in their first year, we could not obtain final spending or participant totals. We gathered information on resources that were available to date and those the programs told us they were certain to receive by the end of the initial funding period. We cannot say whether all resources will be used over the course of the funding period. Similarly, our FTE participant total will not reflect either attrition that occurred after we conducted our field work or instances in which slots expected to be filled are ultimately unfilled.

<sup>12</sup>Two of the programs in our sample were not operating, two did not respond, and one responded after our cut-off date.

<sup>13</sup>A 14th agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, was on the list provided by the Corporation but was not operating its program this year.



The data obtained were self-reported by program officials and were not independently verified with other sources. We provided the grantees with a form identifying the information needed, explained the questions on the form to them, answered their questions about our data needs, reviewed the responses, and followed up with further questions whenever responses were incomplete or inconsistent.

## Analyzing the Data

Several assumptions underlie our estimates of available resources per participant. First, we assumed that a program will return a pro rata share of its Corporation grant if it has fewer participants than anticipated at the time of its grant application. The Corporation may require a program to return the grant portion that would have gone toward participant living expenses and benefits. We did not make a similar adjustment to a program's non-Corporation resources because we obtained this information in May 1995, late enough in programs' operating year for them to predict available resources and participant levels. Second, we considered contributions from public universities as public resources, and those from private universities, private. We made this assumption realizing that both public and private universities receive a mixture of public and private support, but given the reliance of public postsecondary institutions on public support, we believe such an assumption is appropriate. Third, we made no adjustment to in-kind contributions reported to us although we recognize that these resources are sometimes very difficult to value. Fourth, we calculated available resources per participant on a full-time-equivalent basis, counting a part-time participant as 50 percent of an FTE participant. In calculating available resources, we excluded private in-kind contributions from our per-participant and per-service-hour calculations.

## Corporation Administrative Cost Data

To determine per-participant resources associated with the Corporation's administrative responsibilities, we combined the following three components. First, we allocated fiscal year 1995 National and Community Service Trust Act appropriated funds for this purpose across the estimated number of AmeriCorps\*USA participants and other programs covered under this appropriation. Second, we divided fiscal year 1994 AmeriCorps\*USA program planning grants by the number of estimated AmeriCorps\*USA participants. Third, we divided fiscal year 1995 grants covering state commission operating expenses by the number of estimated AmeriCorps\*USA participants.

---

## Education Awards Cost

In calculating total Corporation resources per participant, we added \$4,725 per FTE for the education award because the Corporation incurs this liability for each full-time participant. To the extent that participants do not actually take advantage of their awards, funds expended would be lower than our estimate.

---

## Combining Information From All Sources

We produced estimates for nonfederal programs from our sample and added the data on all federal programs to obtain estimated totals for all AmeriCorps\*USA programs.

---

## Estimates for Nonfederal Programs

We used a ratio estimation methodology to estimate available resources and participation for all nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA programs. This method incorporated information on anticipated matching resources and numbers of participants from the programs' grant applications. To estimate resources, we computed the ratio of actual to anticipated matching resources for our sample programs, and we applied this ratio to total anticipated matching resources for all nonfederal programs. Similarly, to estimate participants, we applied the ratio of actual to anticipated participants for the sample programs to the number of anticipated participants in all programs. These estimates of resources and participants were used to calculate the available resources per participant for nonfederal programs.

---

## Totals for AmeriCorps\*USA

To estimate total resources and participants for all AmeriCorps\*USA programs, we combined estimated totals for nonfederal programs with federal program totals. Our federal program information was not projected from a sample because we had information from every federal program. We used the combined results to produce an overall estimate for AmeriCorps\*USA programs.

# Detailed Results of Resource Analysis

Source	Nonfederal programs			Federal programs			All programs		
	Per FTE (n= 10,465)	Per total service hour	Per direct service hour	Per FTE (n= 2,054)	Per total service hour	Per direct service hour	Per FTE (n= 12,519)	Per total service hour	Per direct service hour
Corporation for National and Community Service									
Funding	\$18,602	\$10.94	\$13.68	\$12,665	\$7.45	\$9.31	\$17,629	\$10.37	\$12.96
Other federal									
Cash	493	0.29	0.36	11,187	6.58	8.23	2,247	1.32	1.65
In-kind	261	0.15	0.19	4,338	2.55	3.19	930	0.55	0.68
Subtotal other federal	755	0.44	0.55	15,525	9.13	11.42	3,177	1.87	2.34
<b>Subtotal federal</b>	<b>\$19,357</b>	<b>\$11.39</b>	<b>\$14.23</b>	<b>\$28,191</b>	<b>\$16.58</b>	<b>\$20.73</b>	<b>\$20,806</b>	<b>\$12.24</b>	<b>\$15.30</b>
State and local									
Cash	2,607	1.53	1.92	564	0.33	0.41	2,272	1.34	1.67
In-kind	1,880	1.11	1.38	1,126	0.66	0.83	1,756	1.03	1.29
Subtotal state and local	4,487	2.64	3.30	1,690	0.99	1.24	4,028	2.37	2.96
<b>Subtotal public</b>	<b>\$23,844</b>	<b>\$14.03</b>	<b>\$17.53</b>	<b>\$29,881</b>	<b>\$17.58</b>	<b>\$21.97</b>	<b>\$24,834</b>	<b>\$14.61</b>	<b>\$18.26</b>
Private									
Cash	1,953	1.15	1.44	1,136	0.67	0.84	1,819	1.07	1.34
<b>Total without private in-kind</b>	<b>\$25,797</b>	<b>\$15.17</b>	<b>\$18.97</b>	<b>\$31,017</b>	<b>\$18.25</b>	<b>\$22.81</b>	<b>\$26,654</b>	<b>\$15.68</b>	<b>\$19.60</b>

Notes: We assumed "total service hours" equals 1,700 per participant, while "direct service hours" equals 1,700 less 20 percent, or 1,360, per participant.

Items may not sum to subtotals or totals because of rounding.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Sampling Error and Sensitivity Analysis Results

We tested the stability of our per-participant resource estimates. First, we calculated a 95-percent confidence interval around our results to examine the extent of possible sampling error. Second, we analyzed the effects of changing some of the assumptions we made about AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' program operations.

## Sampling Error

Because our estimates incorporated results from a sample of nonfederal programs, a sampling error is associated with these estimates. We estimated both total resources and the number of participants using a ratio methodology, and the calculation of resources per participant is a ratio of these ratios and has its own sampling error. At the 95-percent confidence level, the sampling error for our estimated resources for nonfederal programs of \$25,797 per participant is plus or minus \$810 (see table III.1). The sampling error for our total estimate of \$26,654 per AmeriCorps\*USA member is about \$120 lower than for the nonfederal estimate.

**Table III.1: Estimated Resources Per Participant and Associated Bounds of 95-Percent Confidence Interval**

	Nonfederal	Federal	Total
Lower bound	\$24,988	n/a	\$25,960
Estimate	25,797	\$31,017	26,654
Upper bound	26,607	n/a	27,347

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

Note: The lower and upper bounds refer to the limits of the 95-percent confidence interval; that is, there is a 95-percent probability that the actual resources per participant for AmeriCorps\*USA programs fall within these bounds.

## Sensitivity of Our Results to Changes in Certain Key Assumptions

### Funds Returned to the Corporation

If a program had fewer participants than anticipated when it applied for its AmeriCorps\*USA grant, grant money that would have paid for living expenses and benefits for the participants who did not appear could be returned to the Corporation. Our baseline estimate assumed that all of the per-participant grant funds from the Corporation would be returned for

each participant the program was short of its anticipated number. We recalculated the resources per participant using the alternative assumption that no Corporation funds were returned (see table III.2).

**Table III.2: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Returned Corporation Funds**

Assumption and funding element	Resources per participant
<b>Baseline (all per-participant Corporation funds returned)</b>	
Corporation funding	\$17,629
Total resources	\$26,654
<b>No Corporation funds returned</b>	
Corporation funding	\$18,400
Total resources	\$27,425

This assumption did not affect our estimates of other federal, state and local government, and private resources. The changes shown affected only a small portion of the estimate of Corporation funding per participant. Many components of the Corporation funding estimate—for example, the education award of \$4,725 per participant—were based on the actual number of participants.

## Valuation of Public University Contributions

If a program reported a contribution from a public university, we included it as a state or local government contribution, as appropriate. Because such universities receive private as well as public support, and because the programs could not separate these resources by private or public source, we cannot be certain these were indeed all public resources. We estimated resources per participant by source again, counting public university contributions as private contributions (see table III.3).

**Table III.3: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Treatment of Public University Contributions**

Assumption and funding element	Resources per participant
<b>Baseline (public university contributions counted as public)</b>	
State and local government resources	\$4,028
Private cash	1,819
Total resources	\$26,654
<b>Public university contributions counted as private</b>	
State and local government resources	\$3,610
Private cash	1,878
Total resources	\$26,294

This assumption affected both the allocation of resources between public and private sources and the total level of resources per participant. Changing the assumption decreased the level of state and local government resources by about \$420. Of this amount, about \$60 was cash and was added to private resources. The remainder, about \$360, was in-kind; because we did not include private in-kind contributions, the total resources per participant using the alternative assumption decreased by about \$360.

## Valuation of In-Kind Contributions

We were not certain that respondents valued in-kind contributions consistently. To see how sensitive our estimate was to the level of in-kind contributions reported, we estimated totals again, valuing in-kind contributions as 50 percent and then 150 percent of the figures reported to us (see table III.4).

**Table III.4: Sensitivity of Estimate to Assumption Regarding Treatment of In-Kind Contributions**

Assumption and funding element	Resources per participant
<b>Baseline (in-kind contributions valued as reported)</b>	
Corporation funding	\$17,629
Other federal resources	3,177
State and local government resources	4,028
Private cash	1,819
Total resources	\$26,654
<b>In-kind contributions valued as 50 percent of reported value</b>	
Corporation funding	\$17,629
Other federal resources	2,712
State and local government resources	3,150
Private cash	1,819
Total resources	\$25,310
<b>In-kind contributions valued as 150 percent of reported value</b>	
Corporation funding	\$17,629
Other federal resources	3,643
State and local government resources	4,907
Private cash	1,819
Total resources	\$27,997

Note: Items may not sum to totals because of rounding

This assumption affected matching resource estimates for federal, state, and local government sources, but it did not affect the estimate for



Corporation resources. Of the approximately \$9,000 match total, about \$2,700, or nearly one-third, consisted of in-kind contributions, and about \$6,300 consisted of cash contributions. Thus, the total in each alternative differed from the baseline by about \$1,350, or one-half the approximately \$2,700 in-kind total.

# Federal Agency Program and Resource Availability Information

AmeriCorps\*USA programs operated by federal agencies, on average, entailed a larger commitment of federal resources than nonfederal AmeriCorps\*USA programs. The federal agencies largely used their own resources, through either cash or in-kind contributions, to supplement their Corporation grants. To learn more about the funding and operation of these programs, we spoke with officials at all 13 federal agencies that received AmeriCorps\*USA grants for the 1994-95 program year.

## Overview of Federal Agency Programs

Thirteen federal agencies were awarded AmeriCorps\*USA grants in 1994 to fund 15 programs. Of the nearly \$149 million awarded in Corporation operating grants, federal agencies received about \$14.6 million, or about 10 percent of the total. About 2,400 participants, or 16 percent of all participants, served in programs sponsored by federal agencies. Total resources available for federal agency-sponsored programs ranged from about \$22,200 per participant for the National Institute for Literacy's Literacy\*AmeriCorps program to \$66,700 per participant for the Department of the Navy's Seaborne Conservation Corps (see table IV.1). We did not analyze the reasons for the differences in per-participant resource availability because it was beyond the scope of this study.

AmeriCorps\*USA programs sponsored by federal agencies varied in size from 22 full- and part-time AmeriCorps\*USA participants for the Department of Veterans Affairs' program to about 1,200 for the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) program. The number of operating sites per program varied as well. For example, the Navy's program has one site in Galveston, Texas, while USDA's program operated at 326 sites across the country.

Many of the federal agencies did not directly administer their AmeriCorps\*USA programs. These agencies subgranted their Corporation awards to partner organizations, usually nonprofits that have responsibility for day-to-day operations of the programs and oversight of AmeriCorps\*USA participants. In general, the federal agencies served as grant administrators and liaisons between the Corporation and the nonprofit program partners. In addition, some agencies provided technical assistance and training.

**Appendix IV  
Federal Agency Program and Resource  
Availability Information**

**Table IV.1: Resources Available for  
AmeriCorps\*USA Programs  
Sponsored by Federal Agencies**

<b>Federal agency grantee: AmeriCorps*USA program</b>	<b>Corporation award (adjusted)</b>
Agriculture: AmeriCorps/USDA	\$2,467,281
Defense/Navy: Seaborne Conservation Corps	650,226
Energy: Salmon Corps	792,718
Environmental Protection Agency: Improving Disadvantaged Neighborhoods	1,427,335
Health and Human Services/Agency for Children and Families: FamilyServe	506,667
Health and Human Services/Administration on Developmental Disabilities: ADD Corps	669,300
Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration: HRSA Model Health Service Corps	777,833
Interior: Interior AmeriCorps Program	1,149,467
Justice: JustServe	1,277,183
Labor: AmeriCorps/Youth Fair Chance	542,623
National Endowment for the Arts: Writers Corps	379,198
National Institute for Literacy: Literacy*AmeriCorps	737,847
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation: NeighborWorks Community Corps	0
Transportation: National Service Initiative	270,250
Veterans Affairs: Collaboration for Homeless Veterans	423,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,071,004</b>

**Appendix IV  
Federal Agency Program and Resource  
Availability Information**

Other resources			Number of FTEs	Resources available per participant	Resources available per service hour	Resources per direct service hour
Other federal	State/local	Private cash				
\$21,156,957	\$979,355	\$740,250	1,131.5	\$29,186	\$17.17	\$21.46
2,166,338	0	0	47.0	66,715	39.24	49.06
1,375,325	0	105,410	72.0	38,363	22.57	28.21
1,083,947	351,425	106,705	92.0	39,064	22.98	28.72
393,482	82,958	50	50.0	26,450	15.56	19.45
242,868	232,508	191,536	34.5	45,519	26.78	33.47
346,047	157,315	67,191	58.5	29,837	17.55	21.94
1,776,914	67,315	720,000	155.0	30,747	18.09	22.61
1,670,000	1,227,236	0	172.5	30,987	18.23	22.78
299,320	0	0	50.5	23,459	13.80	17.25
194,984	10,000	155,000	35.5	27,610	16.24	20.30
29,600	34,700	160,913	62.5	22,196	13.06	16.32
566,000	144,500	30,000	28.0	33,234	19.55	24.44
420,099	182,696	56,397	42.0	28,917	17.01	21.26
159,450	0	0	22.0	33,266	19.57	24.46
<b>\$31,881,332</b>	<b>\$3,470,008</b>	<b>\$2,333,452</b>	<b>2,653.5</b>	<b>\$31,017<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>\$18.25<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$22.81<sup>c</sup></b>

Note: Items may not sum to totals because of rounding.

<sup>a</sup>This figure is the sum of (1) Corporation award (adjusted), other federal contributions, state and local government contributions, and private cash, for all federal agencies together, divided by number of FTEs for all federal agencies, plus (2) an education award of \$4,725 per FTE, plus (3) Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. It is not an average of the individual agency figures.

<sup>b</sup>This represents the resources per participant divided by 1,700 service hours. It is not an average of the individual agency figures.

<sup>c</sup>This represents the resources per participant divided by 1,360 direct service hours. It is not an average of the individual agency figures.

## Detailed Information on 15 Federal Agency Programs

The 15 agency programs varied widely in their scope and missions. All information presented here, including descriptions of the agency mission fulfilled by the AmeriCorps\*USA program, participant tasks, and funding streams, was provided by agency officials.

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

---

Department of Agriculture:  
AmeriCorps/USDA

USDA had the largest of the federal agency AmeriCorps\*USA programs. The program operated at 326 sites in 38 states, with some sites hosting only one AmeriCorps\*USA participant. These sites, located nationwide, emphasized one of three areas: fighting hunger, protecting the environment, and rebuilding rural America. Nutrition education is a major element of the Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Team's work. Members provide nutrition assistance to the poor, senior citizens, and schools. Members of the Public Lands and Environment Team help repair and upgrade community facilities, protect watersheds, and preserve and restore national forests. The Rural Development Team helps protect water quality, improve housing, respond to disasters, and generally promote economic development. Most AmeriCorps/USDA participants joined the program in September 1994.

---

Department of  
Defense/Department of the  
Navy: Seaborne  
Conservation Corps

The Seaborne Conservation Corps (scc) is a military-style residential environmental and drug awareness education project sponsored by the Department of Defense/Department of the Navy, the Texas National Guard, and Texas A&M University at Galveston, which has primary responsibility for day-to-day program operations. scc is a 9-month residential program, and participants are considered part time. scc provides high school dropouts with an opportunity to earn their general equivalency diploma (GED) and acquire a basic seaman's license while performing environmental services for the community. scc evolved out of the Junior Leadership Corps, a program of the Navy's Drug Demand Reduction Task Force, which was designed to support military dependents. scc supports the task force's mission to develop and support programs that decrease the demand for illegal drugs within and, when directed, outside of the Navy. scc members joined the program in September 1994.

---

Department of Energy:  
Salmon Corps

The Department of Energy's Salmon Corps aims at restoring the salmon habitat along the Columbia River Basin in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Through the coordination of its operating partner, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Earth Conservation Corps, the Salmon Corps brings together five Native American tribes located in these three states. At the five tribal sites, Salmon Corps participants restore salmon habitats damaged by hydroelectricity production. Tasks include removing trash and debris, building fences to restrict livestock access to salmon habitats, and renovating historically significant properties. As is the case with other AmeriCorps\*USA programs sponsored by federal agencies, participants do



work that the Department is already mandated by law to carry out. The program meets at least two departmental missions: (1) reducing the impact of energy production and use and (2) helping to develop a technically trained, diverse workforce and enhance scientific and technical literacy. Salmon Corps participants joined in September 1994.

---

**Environmental Protection  
Agency: Improving  
Disadvantaged  
Neighborhoods**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sponsors six AmeriCorps\*USA programs operated at nine sites. Each program has a different focus that helps fulfill EPA's missions. Participants of the Drinking Water Contamination program in El Paso, Texas, which is run by the University of Texas at El Paso and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission, identify sources of contamination in public drinking water wells and educate the community on methods of managing and preventing water pollution. Another AmeriCorps\*USA team, overseen by EPA local staff, works with residents of 15 native Alaskan villages to reduce, reuse, and recycle their waste. Participants in Oregon and Washington states help public schools adopt energy-conserving technology available through the EPA's Green Lights program. That AmeriCorps\*USA program is a partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration and Oregon and Washington State Energy Offices. Revitalization of inner-city neighborhoods in Boston, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, is the focus of the fourth program, which utilizes AmeriCorps\*USA participants from City Year, the nonprofit partner. In the fifth program, which is operated by nonprofit organizations or state or local government agencies at four sites (Oakland, California; Newark, New Jersey; Atlanta, Georgia; and Tacoma, Washington), AmeriCorps\*USA participants restore urban streams and educate residents about the dangers of lead and radon contamination. EPA's sixth program, the Anacostia River Restoration, is run by the Metropolitan Council of Governments in Washington, D.C. AmeriCorps\*USA participants joined EPA's programs in September 1994.

---

**Department of Health and  
Human Services/Agency  
for Children and Families:  
FamilyServe**

The Department of Health and Human Services' FamilyServe had AmeriCorps\*USA participants working in three Head Start programs, two located in migrant communities in Texas and Florida and one run by a tribal college on Indian reservations in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. AmeriCorps\*USA participants assist staff in local Head Start child care centers by, among other things, conducting nutrition programs, linking residents with community medical resources, and providing recreation activities for children. These activities support the

Department's mission to enhance the quality of early childhood development. Head Start FamilyServe participants joined in September 1994.

Department of Health and  
Human Services/  
Administration on  
Developmental  
Disabilities: ADD Corps

The Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) operates the ADD Corps in three states: Georgia, Alabama, and Pennsylvania. Its goal is to improve the independence, productivity, and community integration of people with developmental disabilities. The ADD Corps furthers ADD's mission to support and encourage the provision of quality services to persons with developmental disabilities. AmeriCorps\*USA participants at the ADD Corps sites, which are run by local university-affiliated developmental disability programs, provide support services to people who are disabled. ADD Corps participants, some of whom are themselves disabled, joined the program in October 1994.

Department of Health and  
Human Services/Health  
Resources and Services  
Administration: HRSA  
Model Health Service  
Corps

The Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Model Health Service Corps is designed to enhance community health resources. Improving access to quality comprehensive primary health care and related services is a main goal of HRSA. Corps participants, who are health profession students and community health workers, work at one of three program sites: Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Chicago, Illinois. At each site, HRSA has a local organization as a partner that administers the project: the Health Federation of Philadelphia, the Allegheny County Health Department, and the Chicago Health Consortium. HRSA Corps participants provide services that increase access to health care for community residents. These services include home visits, referrals, transportation, and child care. HRSA Corps participants joined in September 1994.

Department of the Interior:  
Interior AmeriCorps  
Program

The Department of the Interior funds five projects, located throughout the country, designed to support Interior's environmental conservation mission. Four of the projects are partnerships of one or more of the Department's agencies (the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation) and nonprofit organizations that, with local agency officials, manage the projects and provide administrative support to the projects. Participants in two of these projects help restore and protect the environment in the Florida Everglades and along the Rio Grande. The Student Conservation

Association is the nonprofit partner for both of these projects. Participants at a project at Fort Ord in Monterey, California, help transform the former military base into public recreational land. The California Conservation Corps is the nonprofit partner. At the Southern California Urban Water Conservation project, located in Los Angeles, California, a partnership with the nonprofit Executive Partnerships for Environmental Resources Training (ExPERT), participants distribute water-saving fixtures to low-income residents. The fifth project, run by the Department's U.S. Geological Survey, has sites in Virginia, Hawaii, California, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Georgia, where participants help staff update national geological and hydrological information. AmeriCorps\*USA participants joined the Interior programs in September 1994.

---

**Department of Justice:  
JustServe**

The Department of Justice's JustServe program operates through recipients of its Weed and Seed program grants. Justice's Weed and Seed program promotes community-oriented approaches to crime-fighting. Weed and Seed programs are designed at the local level and run by a coalition of local government representatives and community members. Local Weed and Seed grant recipients were required to incorporate a plan for using AmeriCorps\*USA participants into their Weed and Seed grant applications. AmeriCorps\*USA participants work at one of seven Weed and Seed sites: Seattle, Washington; Los Angeles, California; Fort Worth and San Antonio, Texas; Trenton, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Madison, Wisconsin. AmeriCorps\*USA participants carry out activities in three priority areas determined by Justice that enhance local Weed and Seed efforts: (1) enhancing community police efforts by working with local police staff, (2) assisting schools by conducting conflict mediation and drug prevention programs, and (3) supporting social services by helping community members obtain services. JustServe participants joined the program in September 1994.

---

**Department of Labor:  
AmeriCorps/Youth Fair  
Chance**

Youth Fair Chance (YFC) is a Department of Labor pilot program designed to concentrate resources and services in high-poverty areas to benefit the community. The Department awards YFC grants to local organizations, such as private industry councils, mayor's offices, or local nonprofit organizations, that run the YFC projects. AmeriCorps\*USA participants augment existing YFC projects, increasing resources available at the eight sites: Seattle, Washington; Fresno and Los Angeles, California; Fort Worth, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; New York City, New York; rural Kentucky; and Baltimore, Maryland. Participants' activities focus on literacy, public

safety, and assisting expectant and new teen mothers and children. YFC participants joined in January 1995.

---

**National Endowment for  
the Arts: Writers Corps**

The National Endowment for the Arts is a federal agency that supports the visual, literary, and performing arts. Writers Corps participants provide programs and activities that promote accessibility to the arts for young and old people residing in inner cities, particularly in those neighborhoods with very limited access to art resources. These are mostly neighborhoods with high crime rates and drug activity. The Writers Corps operates at three sites: the Bronx, New York; San Francisco, California; and Washington, D.C. Writers Corps participants joined in September 1994.

---

**National Institute for  
Literacy:  
Literacy\*AmeriCorps**

The National Institute for Literacy, created in 1991, is an independent agency managed by the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. The Institute does not deliver services directly but instead helps to establish collaborations among literacy groups at the state and local level and provides technical assistance to these collaborative programs. The goal of the Institute's Literacy\*AmeriCorps program is to establish models of one-on-one literacy tutoring programs at the local level that can be replicated nationwide. Literacy\*AmeriCorps has four program sites: Seattle, Washington; Houston, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At each site, a local coalition of literacy organizations manages the program. In addition to one-on-one tutoring, AmeriCorps\*USA participants help strengthen local literacy coalitions and recruit students from homeless shelters and public housing developments to participate in literacy programs. Literacy\*AmeriCorps participants joined in September 1994.

---

**Neighborhood  
Reinvestment Corporation:  
NeighborWorks  
Community Corps**

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation is a federally chartered, public nonprofit corporation that provides technical assistance to support nonprofit organizations that make up its NeighborWorks network. NeighborWorks is a partnership of 173 nonprofit groups that work with residents and government and business leaders to revitalize urban and rural neighborhoods and make affordable housing available. NeighborWorks Community Corps programs operate in 16 cities: Baltimore, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; Clearwater, Florida; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Los Angeles and Pasadena, California; New York City, New York; Savannah, Georgia; St. Paul, Minnesota; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Chattanooga, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Hartford, New

---

Britain, New Haven, and Stamford, Connecticut. AmeriCorps\*USA participants help provide affordable housing and increase neighborhood volunteer activity to revitalize communities. NeighborWorks Community Corps participants joined in July 1994.

---

Department of  
Transportation: National  
Service Initiative

The Department of Transportation funds three AmeriCorps\*USA programs. Two, located in Baltimore, Maryland, and Vancouver, Washington, are sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration. The third program, located in Washington, D.C., is sponsored by the Department's Federal Transit Administration. Each project is administered by a nonprofit or state or local government organization. Community Building in Partnership administers the Baltimore program; the Washington Service Corps and City of Vancouver administer the Vancouver program; and the D.C. Service Corps administers the Washington, D.C., program. The three programs contribute to the Department's goal of bringing together transportation and community service by implementing programs that improve the safety and accessibility of transportation systems. AmeriCorps\*USA participants at the Baltimore site help with activities that include street maintenance, demolition, and landscaping; at the Vancouver site, they clean up and rehabilitate local walking trails; at the Washington, D.C., site, they assist elderly residents in using public transportation. AmeriCorps\*USA participants joined in September 1994.

---

Department of Veterans  
Affairs: Collaboration for  
Homeless Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Collaboration for Homeless Veterans program operates at two sites: Los Angeles, California, and Houston, Texas. AmeriCorps\*USA participants address the needs of homeless veterans. Some of the participants themselves are veterans. The Los Angeles site is managed by local nonprofit community service organizations that provide veterans' services and the local Veterans Affairs medical center. There, AmeriCorps\*USA participants help to renovate a building formerly used as a corporate training site into transitional housing for homeless veterans. The Houston site is jointly managed by the Department's regional office and Stand Down Homes, a nonprofit organization. There, AmeriCorps\*USA participants renovate foreclosed properties, turning them into housing for homeless veterans. AmeriCorps\*USA participants joined in September 1994.



# Information Gathered From Site Visits

We visited seven AmeriCorps\*USA grantees' programs to obtain more detailed information on amounts and sources of available resources, to verify program accomplishments, and to gain insight into local program operations.<sup>14</sup> These programs were judgmentally selected to provide examples of a wide range of characteristics, such as level of Corporation funding, type of grant, program size, and mission.

The following summaries provide information on participant characteristics, funding sources and levels, and operations. We have calculated resources per participant, per service hour, and per direct service hour. We adjusted the Corporation's grants proportionally based on the number of participants enrolled at the time of our visit as compared with the number of participants originally expected. In calculating resources per participant, we included dollars for two components that local programs did not control—\$2,062 for the Corporation's overhead and \$4,725 for the participant's education award. Although some participants may not use the full education award, the funds are held in trust and available to those who earn them for 7 years. In calculating resources per service hour, we used 1,700 hours as the required number of hours for a full-time-equivalent participant completing the program. In calculating resources per direct service hour, we used 80 percent of the required hours because participants must spend at least 80 percent of their time in direct service rather than in education, training, or similar activities.

The information provided represents a "snapshot" of the programs at the time of our visits, but some programs may not use all available funding or may be given additional resources, and participant levels may change.

## AmeriCorps Maryland Community Assisting Police

The Montgomery County (Maryland) Police Department began operating the Community Assisting Police program in January 1995. The program's mission is to engage in community education and outreach projects that address the needs for crime control, prevention, and the reduction of fear in underserved or at-risk communities. The Department applied for AmeriCorps\*USA funding to implement a community policing initiative that had faltered in the face of growing cultural and language barriers between it and the community.

<sup>14</sup>We visited two sites of one grantee, the Department of Agriculture—the Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps and the Vermont Youth Corps - National Service Academy.

**Table V.1: Estimated Program Resources for AmeriCorps Maryland Community Assisting Police**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=23.5)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$332,125	\$14,133	\$8.31	\$10.39
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	92,260	3,926	2.31	2.89
In-kind	232,550	9,896	5.82	7.28
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	4,286	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$661,221</b>	<b>\$34,742*</b>	<b>\$20.44*</b>	<b>\$25.55*</b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Participant ages range from 17 to 64. Most are in college or are college graduates. A third of the original participants were bilingual, speaking a total of six languages. Half were pursuing law enforcement careers. Program officials projected that 90 percent will use the education award.

The program budgeted for 20 full-time and 10 part-time participants; at the time of our visit, the program had 18 full-time and 11 part-time participants. More recently, the program has lost six of its original participants for reasons including insufficient financial support, employment or education opportunities, and the inability to function independently in an unstructured environment. New participants have been trained and have replaced them.

## Program Structure

Participants complete 1 week of training at the outset, which focuses on technical skills and team-building training. They work either as community mobilizers or victim assistance advocates at headquarters, six satellite facilities, five district stations, one mobile facility, the State Attorney's Office, and the County Division of Victim Services. Each week, the



participants meet for 2 hours of additional training and reflection. Participants record their hours and activities on weekly time sheets signed by their supervisors. In addition, supervisors evaluate their efforts and work using a detailed performance evaluation form after the first 2 months, after 6 months, and at the end of participants' service. Full-time participants received biweekly living allowance stipends of \$400, while part-timers received \$140.

### Program Accomplishments

During site visits at two satellite police stations, we observed participants performing outreach services at schools, businesses, and residential groups. Participant projects included distributing flyers to alert residents of area car thefts, coordinating a school Crime Awareness Day, organizing a date-rape presentation at a high school, analyzing neighborhood crime statistics to identify developing problems, providing bilingual referrals and assistance to crime victims, and educating senior citizens about how to protect themselves from crime.

### AmeriCorps Health and Housing Fellows

The Boston University School of Public Health is the primary administrator of the AmeriCorps Health and Housing Fellows program. Boston University collaborates with three partner institutions to operate the program: University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Texas at El Paso School of Public Health, and Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing at Baltimore, Maryland. This integrated work-service-education program uses the skills of returned overseas Peace Corps volunteers to serve targeted communities needing improvements in health and living conditions. The four universities operate the program in separate urban sites located at housing authorities, transitional housing and homeless shelters, community health and social service agencies, and urban health centers.

Corporation program funds are matched by other resources from federal, state, and county sources; service agencies; and private and university sources.

**Table V.2: Estimated Program Resources for AmeriCorps Health and Housing Fellows**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=17)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$290,919	\$17,113	\$10.07	\$12.58
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	36,000	2,118	1.25	1.56
In-kind	23,292	1,370	0.81	1.01
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	28,264	1,663	0.98	1.22
In-kind	108,915	6,407	3.77	4.71
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	29,062	1,710	1.01	1.26
In-kind	151,111	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$667,563</b>	<b>\$37,167<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>\$21.86<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>\$27.33<sup>a</sup></b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

<sup>a</sup>Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Program participants are recruited from a pool of returned Peace Corps volunteers with an average age of 30 and who have at least a bachelor's degree. AmeriCorps\*USA participants undertake full-time or part-time community service while pursuing graduate education programs at one of the four universities. Participants receive a work stipend (ranging from \$3,397 to \$6,500 per year), financial assistance for matriculation in a master's in public health or a graduate nursing program, an AmeriCorps\*USA education award, and, at Boston University, program housing assistance.

The program is funded for 36 participants: 26 full-time and 10 part-time slots. Program officials stated that primarily because of late funding decisions, the program was unable to meet its participation goal; the program had only 12 full-time participants at the time of our visit. Boston University had 5 of 15 planned full-time participants, Alabama had 5 of 6, and Texas had 2 of 5 planned full-time participants; Johns Hopkins had 10 part-time participants as planned.

---

## Program Structure

Part-time participants must complete 900 hours of community service for their 2-year program commitment while enrolled in a university nursing program. Full-time participants must complete 1,700 hours of public health community service for each year of program participation while enrolled in a university public health program.

Boston University participants are required to live either in a housing authority project or within the same community where the authority is located; other university sites have no such requirement.

Participants are required to have daily logs of times and functions completed and provide monthly progress reports to supervisors for forwarding to program administrators.

Boston University, as program administrator, has total program oversight. After conducting an evaluation, Boston University decided to close the Texas site because it was not meeting program participant goals.

---

## Program Accomplishments

In Massachusetts, participants implement tenant health and economic self-sufficiency programs specified by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Participants live among and provide services directly to tenants in housing authority projects.

A housing authority official commented that these services are provided at her complex at approximately half the cost of an employed social worker; she also said the direct and accepted participant-tenant relationship was a benefit.

We spoke with one participant who stated that the program provided a real-world application of public health education principles and made obtaining a graduate degree possible through reduced tuition costs, a living allowance and housing, and an education award.

---

## MAGIC ME

MAGIC ME America, a nonprofit organization founded in 1980 in Baltimore, Maryland, conducts intergenerational service-learning programs. The organization's mission is to motivate and educate adolescents by involving them in long-term service with elderly and other needy groups and their communities. MAGIC ME is designed to recruit these groups to volunteer in their communities. In addition to engaging youth and elders in service, MAGIC ME involves school and nursing home

staff, high school and college interns, business leaders, and community volunteers. The MAGIC ME organization operates three AmeriCorps\*USA programs in San Joaquin County, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Baltimore, Maryland. AmeriCorps\*USA participants establish and conduct MAGIC ME groups and recruit and train volunteers and interns. Program officials reported that in the 1994-1995 period, 25 AmeriCorps\*USA participants developed 95 MAGIC ME groups involving 2,660 youth and elderly. In addition, they recruited and trained 500 interns and volunteers.

Table V.3: Estimated Program Resources for MAGIC ME

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=25)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$646,552	\$25,862	\$15.21	\$19.02
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	63,000	2,520	1.48	1.85
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	65,500	2,620	1.54	1.93
In-kind	71,390	2,856	1.68	2.10
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	225,176	9,007	5.30	6.62
In-kind	40,750	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,112,368</b>	<b>\$49,652*</b>	<b>\$29.21*</b>	<b>\$36.51*</b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants ranged from 20 to 40 years old and came from a wide variety of racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Program officials said that all participants plan to use their education awards to begin or continue their postsecondary education. Many plan to enter fields such as teaching and social work. The program was budgeted for 29 full-time participants. These slots were initially filled, but participation had dropped to 25 at the time of our visit because one participant successfully completed the program, one converted to part-time, and the others left for unstated reasons.

---

## Program Structure

Members spend approximately 20 percent of their service time training to develop core competencies needed for establishing and conducting MAGIC ME programs, including topics related to gerontology, youth, intergenerational issues, and community problem-solving.

Participants report weekly work entries and hours to program monitors; weekly and cumulative service and training hours are recorded separately. Program monitors compile monthly participant progress reports that summarize their entries. Progress reports are compared with earlier monthly work goals developed jointly by the participant and team leader or program administrator. Participants receive a stipend of \$364 every 2 weeks for 21 biweekly periods, totaling \$7,644.

---

## Program Accomplishments

MAGIC ME aims to improve the program's effectiveness and expand the program to reach youth and elderly nationwide. AmeriCorps\*USA helps meet these goals by providing matching program funds and a national presence. Program officials stated that these combined resources have made it possible to expand the number of people served by over 800 percent in the three AmeriCorps\*USA program sites. Each of these sites uses a different operating model, which provides MAGIC ME with the opportunity to test new program approaches designed to meet the needs of various communities. The sites range from inner city to agricultural, and participating youth include gang members, gifted and talented students, special education students, and pregnant teens from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

AmeriCorps\*USA participants interviewed at the Baltimore site stated that the program has helped them to build their self-confidence and self-esteem and to think of bigger things to do with their lives. All three participants interviewed planned to use their education awards to start or return to college.

In addition, we interviewed three staff members at Baltimore area facilities for the elderly who spoke highly of the AmeriCorps\*USA participants and their efforts in meeting student, elder, teacher, and care facility personnel needs. Their presence was said to be a key ingredient to the program.

## Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) began operating the Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps in December 1994. OEO was awarded its AmeriCorps\*USA grant in July 1994; however, because this was a new effort, it used the fall of 1994 to plan. As one of several programs funded by a national direct federal agency AmeriCorps\*USA grant to USDA, it operates in five sites in Vermont. OEO signed on as an applicant for funding from the USDA's AmeriCorps\*USA grant to initiate a statewide approach to hunger that would increase participation of low-income and rural residents in federal food assistance programs and teach them about nutrition and how to buy and plant food.

Table V.4: Estimated Program Resources for Vermont Anti-Hunger, Nutrition, and Empowerment Corps

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=33)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$660,622	\$20,019	\$11.78	\$14.72
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	50,000	1,515	0.89	1.11
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	304,860	9,238	5.43	6.79
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	56,601	1,715	1.01	1.26
In-kind	11,587	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,083,670</b>	<b>\$39,274*</b>	<b>\$23.10*</b>	<b>\$28.88*</b>

Legend

n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4.725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2.062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants' ages range from 19 to 67. Most have either attended or graduated from college. Program officials expect all participants to use their education awards.

The program was budgeted for 40 full-time slots. At the time of our visit, there were 33 full-time participants on board. Five original participants had left; since our visit, six additional participants have left. Reasons included financial difficulties, extreme personal needs and issues, inability

to work independently without explicit instructions, and the stress caused by living in group houses.

## Program Structure

Participants complete a minimum of 100 hours of training in areas that include nutrition education, federal and state food assistance policy, and community service. They are divided into five crews of up to eight participants that are stationed in one of five regional sites. Four of the five crews live together in group houses.

Participants report weekly work entries and hours to team leaders; weekly and cumulative service and training hours are recorded separately. Team leaders compile monthly team progress reports that summarize the individual entries. Participants receive a stipend of \$7,660 for the program year; those beginning the program after its start receive an adjusted amount. They receive biweekly checks from which 25 percent of the stipend is automatically deducted to pay their rent.

## Program Accomplishments

During site visits to a community food bank and a garden tenant program, we saw participants providing special foods and instruction for clients with special dietary needs, conducting outreach efforts to establish a summer food program for the elderly and children as an extension of the school-year program, and teaching low-income and rural residents to plant and buy food to get more and better food for their resources.

One member who attended basic education classes and was individually tutored by team members recently passed the preliminary GED test.

## Washington (State) Conservation Corps

The Washington (State) Conservation Corps originated in 1983. It is a crew-based youth employment, education, and training program that provides resources, conservation services, and training to meet ecology needs. Through 1993 state legislation, the Corps was mandated to address watershed restoration projects and create jobs in 20 designated counties hardest hit by timber industry reductions. The State Department of Ecology operated the program and conducted projects on a fee-for-service basis for federal and state agencies and private landowners. In 1994, the Corps became affiliated with the AmeriCorps\*USA program, thereby providing additional education benefits to program participants.



**Table V.5: Estimated Program Resources for Washington (State) Conservation Corps**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=91)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$0 <sup>a</sup>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	722,200	7,936	4.67	5.84
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	1,003,850	11,031	6.49	8.11
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	147,200	1,618	0.95	1.19
In-kind	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,873,250</b>	<b>\$27,372<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$16.10<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>\$20.13<sup>b</sup></b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

<sup>a</sup>The Corporation only provided education awards for this program. No operating grant was provided.

<sup>b</sup>Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 28. Most were high school graduates and local residents.

## Program Structure

This is a 1-year program combining field work on the job and classroom instruction. Participants complete 160 hours of program training in land restoration, which can be combined with a 36-hour college credit certificate program leading to an environmental restoration technician rating and further college education. Participants work in 1 of 16 crews providing land restoration services. The AmeriCorps\*USA program only funds the cost of the participants' education awards. State and work site projects cover the cost of operating the program by paying fees for the Corps' services.

Participants report hourly entries every 2 weeks to their site leader, who in turn reports to the team leader. Both leaders sign off on each participant's

cumulative service and training hours, which are recorded and sent to the Department of Ecology.

## Program Accomplishments

Participants get a wide variety of field experiences in watershed restoration, reforestation, stream and salmon habitat rehabilitation, forest fire and oil spill response, plus other conservation projects encompassing classroom and field concepts. At the time of our site visit, the program was active at 16 sites; 2 additional sites were temporarily inactive because of inclement conditions. During the site visit, we observed a team conducting flood control area clean-up and an ecology survey for land restoration. A county senior ecologist present said that the team's work was a valuable resource for land restoration. A program official stated that because the program is highly rated, a large private corporation contracted for a program crew to work on its land.

Also, in conjunction with a state community college, the program has developed a college credit certificate program for participants to earn a state-certified environmental restoration technician rating. All 62 AmeriCorps\*USA participants who registered for credits with the college received some credit while in the program. Thirty-six AmeriCorps\*USA participants have completed the required 36 college credits and are state-certified environmental restoration technicians. The program encourages and supports crew members who are working on their high school equivalency. Between 75 and 85 percent of those working toward the GED have thus far obtained it.

## Washington (State) Service Corps

The Washington (State) Service Corps originated in 1983 as a state citizen service corps to address the needs of unemployed and needy residents. The present AmeriCorps\*USA program began through a competitive bid to the Washington Commission on National and Community Service for funding. The program is a team-based youth employment, education, and training program providing literacy, parenting skills, gang and substance abuse prevention, and family and community social services.

**Table V.6: Estimated Program Resources for Washington (State) Service Corps**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=276)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$2,855,172	\$10,345	\$6.09	\$7.61
<b>Other, federal</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	1,000,000	3,623	2.13	2.66
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,855,172</b>	<b>\$20,755*</b>	<b>\$12.21*</b>	<b>\$15.26*</b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2.062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

The resources available to the program are 74 percent federal funds and 26 percent state and local funds. Its Corporation grant is the program's only federal funding.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants' ages range from 17 to over 60. Most participants, particularly those in the 18- to 21-year-old group, are from local communities affected by the decline of the timber industry. To a lesser degree, some older citizens and nonstate residents participate in the program. Just over half of the participants have some had some college or have college degrees. Although the majority of the youth are high school graduates, some participants are attempting to complete their diplomas or obtain a GED.

## Program Structure

Participants work in teams at various community sites across the state, including one Indian reservation. Each participant spends approximately 20 percent of the program time in training in areas such as team-building, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), conflict resolution, and self-esteem. Participants are also trained in specific topics related to project needs,

including the natural environment, literacy and tutoring skills, tool and construction skills, and health care outreach.

Participant training and work site activity are separately recorded for each 40-hour week during the 11-month program period. Participation is monitored daily, and team leaders sign off on time sheets every 2 weeks. Each participant has a mid-program review with his or her supervisor of events completed and scheduled activities required to complete the program commitment.

## Program Accomplishments

Participants interviewed stated that they plan to apply the learning skills and self-development training they receive in pursuing a college education. Participant program experiences include construction trade and community development work, tutoring students at risk of dropping out of school, and conducting outside school recreational and support services for youth. Many participants felt they were making a visible difference in their communities' quality of life, such as by building and renovating public facilities and helping other youth. We observed participants working on renovations of abandoned housing, on community facilities such as a farm market and a stadium, and in school classrooms.

A town official commented that both the farm market and stadium renovation projects have improved the community and are providing economic and social benefits to citizens. A teacher at another location, whose classroom helper was an AmeriCorps\*USA participant, stated that the participant's work allowed students to get individual help with their particular study problems.

## YouthBuild Boston

YouthBuild Boston is the first replication of the YouthBuild Program that originated in Harlem in 1990. Its AmeriCorps\*USA program began operating in October 1994 in Boston. A large, urban program, it received a Corporation grant through the Massachusetts National and Community Service Commission to renovate buildings to provide low-income housing, reduce community environmental hazards, and conduct violence and dropout prevention programs in schools. Its mission is to engage disenfranchised youth in rebuilding their communities and to provide them with the education and skills to become self-reliant and responsible. It applied for AmeriCorps\*USA funding to double its size, initiate a part-time YouthBuild Teens program, in which YouthBuild graduates serve as mentors and role models to young teens, and expand its services from

housing renovation to include environmental, public safety, and education projects.

**Table V.7: Estimated Program Resources for YouthBuild Boston**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=81)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps*USA grant adjusted	\$988,564	\$12,204	\$7.18	\$8.97
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	1,062,875	13,122	7.72	9.65
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	301,596	3,723	2.19	2.74
In-kind	5,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,358,035</b>	<b>\$35,837*</b>	<b>\$21.08*</b>	<b>\$26.35*</b>

Legend  
n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE. Total does not include private in-kind resources.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants' ages range from 18 to 24. About 75 percent have not completed high school; all are from Boston. Nearly half of the men and 80 percent of the women are young parents, and approximately one-third receive some form of public assistance. While historically one-third of participants have gone on to college, a program official projects that 40 to 50 percent of the participants will use the education award for college or advanced skills training; the two participants with whom we spoke both expected to do so.

When the program began in October 1994, it budgeted for 84 full-time and 10 part-time participants; at the time of our visit, 76 full-time and 10 part-time participants were on board. Since that time, a number of participants have left for various reasons, including full-time employment, returning to school full-time, and deciding that the program was not for them.

---

## Program Structure

Full-time participants complete a 2-week orientation known as Mental Toughness Training, and 1 week of Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety training before beginning field work at 2 housing projects and 10 vacant lots where they conduct environmental testing. During each 2-week period, participants spend 6 full days in service and 4 days in classes in the morning and in service in the afternoon. While on the job, they learn carpentry skills and how to read blueprints under the supervision of union carpenters. Part-time participants receive training in conflict resolution, mediation skills, and violence prevention. They design and conduct workshops on violence, substance abuse, early pregnancy, and dropout prevention programs for Boston middle school students. Full-time participants receive living allowance stipends of \$112.50 per week initially and are eligible to earn bonuses and raises to bring their stipends up to \$147 per week. Part-time participants receive stipends calculated at \$7 per hour for a 20-hour week.

Approximately 75 percent of participants are enrolled in high school equivalency classes. The program combines work and academics through a service learning curriculum in which many classes are project related. For example, math classes are construction or architecture related. Each participant has a formal learning plan, and program staff meet weekly on case management.

---

## Program Accomplishments

During our site visits to two housing projects, participants were working in teams under the supervision of union carpenters on the renovation of a two-family home that will become affordable housing and on an abandoned five-story building that will become a transitional dormitory for homeless youth.

---

## Youth Corps - National Service Academy

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps began operating the Youth Corps - National Service Academy program in January 1995. One of several programs funded by a direct federal agency grant to USDA, it is based at Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont. Its mission is to restore, maintain, and manage the Vermont National Forest and community resources, while providing participants with opportunities to apply their formal training and develop leadership skills. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps applied to USDA for assistance to create a program that combines conservation work, community work, and education to reduce backlogged USDA Forest Service work requests that the Service has been unable to address.

**Table V.8: Estimated Program Resources for Youth Corps - National Service Academy**

Source of contribution	Total resources	Per FTE (n=17)	Per service hour	Per direct service hour
<b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>				
AmeriCorps grant adjusted	\$5,185	\$305	\$0.18	\$0.22
<b>Other federal</b>				
Cash	450,000	26,471	15.57	19.46
In-kind	82,000	4,824	2.84	3.55
<b>State and local government</b>				
Cash	0	0	0	0
In-kind	0	0	0	0
<b>Private</b>				
Cash	74,321	4,372	2.57	3.21
In-kind	18,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$629,506</b>	<b>\$42,758*</b>	<b>\$25.15*</b>	<b>\$31.44*</b>

Legend

n/a = Not Applicable

\*Total includes education award of \$4,725 per FTE and Corporation overhead of \$2,062 per FTE  
Total does not include private in-kind resources.

The resources available to the program are 88 percent federal funds and in-kind contributions, and 12 percent private funds. Of its federal funds, less than 1 percent comes from its Corporation grant; the remainder comes from the USDA Forest Service, of which \$405,000 is a grant to the Corps under terms of the National and Community Service Trust Act. The program also receives private, in-kind contributions in the form of volunteer efforts, supplies, and administration from Green Mountain College.

## Participant Characteristics

Participants' ages range from 18 to about 50. Three-quarters have college degrees in the environmental sciences field and most are seeking applied/practical experience to complement their education and training. A program official projects that all participants will use the education award.

The program is budgeted for 20 full-time participants; at the time of our visit, there were 17 full-time participants. Participants are not replaced mid-cycle because training and team formation occur at the program's outset.



---

## Program Structure

Participants complete 2 weeks of classroom training in wilderness characteristics and survival, Red Cross first aid, team-building techniques, the natural sciences, community policy and needs, personal responsibility and self-sufficiency, and an orientation to field work on forest projects. Participants work in two crews that are sent to the northern and southern halves of the state to complete field projects. Projects are typically generated from backlogged USDA Forest Service work requests on recreational facilities and trails; wilderness management; watershed, timber stand, and fisheries improvements; and environmental education and interpretive programs. In addition to field work, participants conduct weekly environmental literature searches; participate in a reading, writing, and discussion curriculum; and undertake environmental education projects for the community.

Participants live in a dormitory at Green Mountain College. They receive monthly living allowance stipends totaling \$7,625 for the program's duration. Funds for participants' meals are deducted from the stipend.

Work and training hours are broken down into four components—service, education, training, and other, which includes community environmental projects—and recorded daily. Time sheets are submitted to crew leaders each week and recorded for participant tracking and program cost accounting.

---

## Program Accomplishments

During site visits we discussed participants' efforts with a Forest Service employee and met crew members before their deployment to work sites in Green Mountain National Forest.

Participants have the option of pursuing a curriculum worth six upper-level, environmental studies credits at Green Mountain College with a reduced tuition; half have chosen to do so.

# Comments From the Corporation for National and Community Service

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

August 11, 1995

The Honorable Charles Bowsher  
Comptroller General  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

AmeriCorps National Service



CORPORATION  
FOR NATIONAL  
SERVICE

Dear Comptroller General:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the General Accounting Office's draft report entitled "Resources Available for AmeriCorps." We have divided our comments into a discussion of the overall background and philosophy behind AmeriCorps and this particular review; the findings with which we agree; those findings with which we take exception; and methodological concerns. Finally, although in the interests of brevity we are not commenting herein on the details contained in the Report's appendices, we have several specific concerns that are included in an enclosure with this letter.

## Background and Philosophy

A review of AmeriCorps needs to be put in context. In September 1993, the Congress enacted the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 (the "Act") with bipartisan support, setting out several major purposes, including: (1) meeting the unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States; (2) renewing the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community; (3) promoting individual responsibility; and (4) expanding educational opportunity by rewarding individuals who participate in national service.

The primary achievement of AmeriCorps to date has been creating, almost from scratch, a vigorous and business-oriented infrastructure that recruited, selected, trained, and fielded over 20,000 AmeriCorps Members. This achievement was possible because elements of the infrastructure — including 50 brand new state commissions, nonprofit organizations of all sizes, agencies at all levels of government, and the AmeriCorps Members themselves — were empowered to take initiative and make decisions on a decentralized basis. The test they had to meet was straightforward: produce tangible outcomes that addressed America's compelling education, public safety, environmental, and human needs.

1201 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20525  
Telephone: 202-606-5000

Getting Things Done:  
AmeriCorps, National Service  
Learn and Serve America  
National Service Corps

We are gratified that GAO's site visits validated what our broader data indicates: projects and AmeriCorps Members have, even in this first year, already met that test. That they did so with the uncertainties, deadlines, and continuous learning inherent in starting up a new national program is a remarkable accomplishment and a testament to the vision and hard work of many thousands of extraordinary, unsung, Americans. National service is working and the goal set by Congress less than two years ago of enabling thousands of Americans to assume responsibility for their communities and in exchange earn educational opportunities, is being fulfilled. Two recent independent studies support our conclusions.

Within this context, it is important to understand the GAO review -- what it is and what it is not. Based on a specific request from two Members of the Congress, the GAO review identifies resources available to AmeriCorps in its first year of operation, attempts to describe those resources on a per Member basis, and depicts some of the accomplishments of AmeriCorps programs in this first year. The GAO review, quite appropriately, does not purport to be a comprehensive evaluation of the program, does not measure costs actually incurred, and does not attempt to establish whether the benefits of the AmeriCorps outweigh the resources available to its programs.

Even with these limited objectives, we appreciate the difficulties faced by GAO. The entire concept of determining "resources" is unique in GAO's long history. Projecting annual financial and program data for a start-up operation, approximately halfway through the first year, is a very difficult task. The conclusions reached must by definition be preliminary.

More importantly, however, we believe a narrow focus on "resources per Member", "resources per service hour" and "resources per direct service hour" -- as each are defined in GAO's report -- are simply an inappropriate measure for assessing AmeriCorps and calculating its worth. Some resources may appropriately be regarded as benefits, rather than costs -- for example, it is incontestable that taxpayers would regard voluntary donations from corporations to local charities as being benefits and not costs. And even costs cannot be judged in isolation without an assessment of benefits.

Particularly because AmeriCorps' resources include cash and in-kind contributions, from public, mixed and private sector entities and individuals, the three calculations GAO undertook have even less meaning than if we proposed to evaluate our national defense by dividing the Department of Defense's budget by the number of men and women in uniform, and then further by the number of hours spent in battle -- or took NASA's budget, divided it by the number of astronauts and then expressed it in "dollars per astronaut per flight hour". It is simply meaningless to evaluate these resources without also considering what they provide -- in outcome rather than mere output. We believe that many of our programs provide cost effective alternatives for accomplishing broad and important public purposes, and we will conduct the appropriate studies in future years to examine whether that is in fact the case.

#### Findings With Which We Agree

First, GAO's depiction of the Corporation's resources being devoted to AmeriCorps validates the Corporation's estimates. GAO found that the Corporation's resources total about \$17,600 per Member. In testimony before the Congress earlier this year, the Corporation projected that it would invest approximately \$18,800 per Member in fiscal year 1994, with potentially a lesser amount in fiscal year 1995 based on AmeriCorps' originally planned expansion and economies of scale. (Note that Corporation resources are used by programs in the fiscal year following the one in which they are appropriated.)

Second, the Corporation agrees with GAO's overall conclusion about Federal cash spending for AmeriCorps. We have stated generally that total Federal cash spending in this first year of operation should be about \$20,000 per Member, including funds authorized by law and contributed from other Federal Departments and Agencies which were intended to accomplish the mission of those agencies through the use of AmeriCorps. GAO's review concluded that all Federal spending (excluding in-kind contributions) totaled \$19,876 per Member.

Most agencies and departments responded to specific instructions in the Act that they cooperate with AmeriCorps. These particular funds were provided by Congress to the various Federal Departments for carrying out their respective missions, and decisions were made that these independent missions could be carried out most effectively through the AmeriCorps program.

In fact, most agencies have data proving that AmeriCorps accomplished essential tasks less expensively than either federal employees or the private sector could. From our perspective, these programs enable the Corporation and the Federal partners to have a greater impact and do a better job.

Third, we recognize and agree with GAO's identification of accomplishments that are consistent with the purposes of the legislation we are charged with implementing. This Report identified several examples of activities that carry out the separate purposes of the legislation, concluding that AmeriCorps is fulfilling its intended mission in all of its detail and complexity.

#### Findings With Which We Disagree

However, we disagree with several fundamental aspects of the Report, particularly those related to depicting non-Federal resources that are contributed to the program and the calculation of hourly resources per Member.

First, as indicated above, we believe that the calculation of total resources per AmeriCorps Member is misleading at best, and at worst subject to misinterpretation as a measure of the cost of the program. This calculation includes several categories of resources, and is based on several assumptions, which we and many others would challenge. Specifically:

- o Private cash contributions should not be included. They are not taxpayer resources; they are donations voluntarily made by individuals and businesses to support local programs. These contributions do not burden the federal taxpayer -- in fact, they stretch taxpayer support further. The contribution to a worthy charity by a business, whether the corner hardware store or an international giant like IBM, clearly should be encouraged. By lumping these contributions together with federal resources, the Report may have the unintended and disastrous consequence of suggesting to programs and the public that they should reduce the "magic number" of resources-per-Member or per-hour by reducing private sector support. Let's make sure that incentives are placed where they should be: on encouraging local programs to match federal support with funding from beyond the Beltway, particularly from the private sector. That is why many studies treat these donations as a benefit, not a cost, and we share that perspective.

See comment 1.

See comment 1.

- o In-kind resources also do not have any impact on the federal taxpayer and should not be included. This study assigns a value to items such as letting an AmeriCorps Member use a computer after hours to track crime statistics or making available a school gym for programs educating against drug abuse. Again, we view such items as benefits of the program, and worry that their categorization as "resources" will again be misconstrued as costs.

See comment 1.

- o We do not agree with adding local or state resources to these totals. Non-federal (public and private) matching support is required under the Act and forms the type of partnerships designed to fulfill the Act's goal of strengthening communities -- AmeriCorps was designed to achieve this type of leveraging. When police departments, school systems, or other entities choose to contribute to a local AmeriCorps program, they do so because it is judged worthy at the level where analysis of efficacy is easiest -- at the source. State and local support for AmeriCorps is not mandated, but earned -- provided because of the perceived benefits for their local communities. Again, such support does not increase Federal costs, and we believe it unlikely that any Member of Congress would choose to substitute his or her judgment for that of the local authorities in the manner of the latter's use of their own resources.

See comment 2.

- o GAO assumes that all AmeriCorps Members will use their full education award when they complete service. This assumption is simply not realistic; as just one example, military personnel eligible for the GI bill use less than 50% of their benefits. (GAO's site visits and all available evidence from the civilian service world also suggests that usage will not be universal.) Although there is insufficient experience available to date to determine a realistic percentage for AmeriCorps, it seems incontestible that usage will be well under GAO's 100%.

If one adjusts the resources included in the Report to account for the above, a very different conclusion about the total Federal taxpayer resources for AmeriCorps is reached, as shown in the following table.

ADJUSTMENT OF GAO CALCULATION OF ANNUAL RESOURCES PER  
MEMBER

ADJUSTMENT	AMOUNT OF ADJUST- MENT	TOTAL
GAO ESTIMATE PER MEMBER		\$ 26,654
1. Do not include private cash contributions	- 1,819	24,835
2. Do not include in-kind contributions	-2,716	22,119
3. Do not include cash from state/local sources	-2,269	19,851
4. Estimate that 90% of education award will be used	- 473	\$19,378

A second finding with which we disagree is the calculation of resources per service hour. In this calculation, the study attempts to determine the resources devoted to each hour of service of an AmeriCorps Member, and concludes that the amount is \$19.60. All of the above cited differences are also applicable to the hourly calculation. Once again, measuring output (rather than outcome) can not tell us anything about AmeriCorps' effectiveness, relevance or sustainability. Further, we have a number of additional concerns with the methodology used in this calculation. Specifically:

- o The study discounts the hours of AmeriCorps Members, based upon the regulation's allowance for up to 20% of Members' time being spent in training and similar activities. These hours are required either for effective and safe service or for other statutorily mandated purposes. Discounting the hours arbitrarily, and dividing by all the resources (some of which are obviously required to conduct the training and other "non-direct service" activities), can not be supported either by generally accepted accounting principles or the Act. Further, the programs visited by GAO indicated that training may be less than the statutory maximum -- in the Washington Conservation Corps, for example, training time does not exceed 10%.

See comment 3.

See comment 3.

- o The study divides the resources per Member by 1,700 hours, the minimum service hours required for a full-time Member in the Corporation's regulations. GAO did not collect any data on the number of service hours actually completed by individual Members. However, of those successfully completing service to date -- over 1,000 and growing each day -- the average number of hours served is over 1,800. Thus, using 1,800 hours is a more realistic and accurate basis for estimates. GAO's contrary assumption rests in large part on conversations during site visits. Our data includes roughly twice the GAO sample size and is individually accurate and certified, rather than an aggregation of anecdotes, as GAO's source was. Even the visited sites have indicated substantially greater hours in service than the minimum: as shown on the attached, the Washington Conservation Corps expects 2,080 hours of annual service; similarly, the Washington Service Corps averages 1,826 hours.

See comment 3.

- o The study ignores service hours produced by related but uncompensated volunteers, despite the fact that many AmeriCorps programs have an explicit purpose of mobilizing and involving such volunteers in service activities. Once again, GAO's site visits revealed how powerful these programs can be in generating additional volunteer hours towards a common goal. Two of the eight sites visited were particularly instructive: The Washington Service Corps AmeriCorps program generated 75,178 hours of additional volunteer time in just the first three quarters of this first AmeriCorps year -- the equivalent of another 44 AmeriCorps Members -- volunteers mobilized solely because of AmeriCorps.

Similarly, the Report's description of the Magic Me AmeriCorps program (page 53) notes that it deploys 25 Members to create a program involving 3,160 others in uncompensated service. These hours of service are produced by AmeriCorps and deserve to be valued -- particularly when all of the "resources" required to train, equip and supervise those additional volunteers are included in the GAO calculations. Once again, "resources" are calculated expansively, while the service product is repeatedly reduced by overly-restrictive assumptions.

If one adjusts for these difference, as well as those cited earlier, the calculation of resources per service hour for AmeriCorps Members is 50% less than the amount portrayed in the GAO study, as depicted in the table on the following page.



Appendix VI  
Comments From the Corporation for  
National and Community Service

ADJUSTMENT OF GAO CALCULATION OF HOURLY RESOURCES PER  
MEMBER

ADJUSTMENT	AMOUNT OF ADJUST- MENT [in order]	TOTAL
GAO ESTIMATE PER AMERICORPS MEMBER		\$ 19.60
1. Count all hours served by a Member, not just "direct" hrs.	- 3.96	15.68
2. Do not include private cash contributions	- 1.07	14.61
3. Do not include in-kind contributions raised by grantees	-1.60	13.01
4. Do not include cash contributed by state/local sources	-1.33	11.68
5. Estimate that 90% of education award will be used	- 0.28	11.40
6. Estimate, based on experience to date, that AmeriCorps Members will serve an average of 1,800 hrs., not 1,700	-0.63	\$10.77
7. Experience indicates that, on average, AmeriCorps Members will involve 4 unpaid volunteers in service programs. Independent Sector estimates that the average volunteer serves 4.2 hours per week.	-5.23	\$5.54

See comment 4.

Not included in the above table is a third finding of concern: the calculation of resources under that subset of AmeriCorps programs where grants are given to other Federal agencies to work with state and local nonprofits and other entities. Using all of our grants information and following GAO methodology for total resources, we calculate an average of about \$27,000 per Member. Through GAO's survey, however, grantees reported about \$31,000 per Member. We cannot explain this discrepancy, other than to note that a portion of the resources available will not be used because of attrition, a factor that GAO did not take into account.

See comment 4.

For example, the profile of the Vermont Anti-Hunger AmeriCorps program appearing on pages 56 to 59 of the Report uses the Department of Agriculture's budgeted contribution to compare to the program's actual number of AmeriCorps Members. The Department informs us that (like the Corporation), they adjust their contributions during the course of the year to reflect attrition and cost savings. Accordingly, their revised contribution for this program will be \$410,000, not the \$450,000 reflected in the Report. Similar adjustments should be made in all federal programs. We believe that a detailed accounting of spending under these grants would show that their true costs are not as projected in this study.

#### Methodological Concerns

In addition to those cited above, we would note the following methodological limitations to this study, some of which are identified in the Report:

See comment 5.

- o The methodology includes the amounts that grantees hope to raise as a resource. There is no reason, in our limited experience, to assume these all amounts will actually be raised -- and many grounds to assume that they are accordingly overstated.

See comment 5.

- o The study recognizes neither start-up nor capital costs, expensing everything in the first year of operation. This approach neglects regulatory and other requirements making start-up costs a necessity. For example, the Corporation funded planning grants with fiscal year 1994 monies, many of which programs will become operational in fiscal year 1995. GAO's approach was to expense these planning grants in the first year. A different methodology would allocate these resource requirements over the operational life of the program. Secondly, all programs incurred significant start-up costs in their first AmeriCorps year. That many of the assets produced (training curricula and the like) are intangible does not make capitalization either impossible or inappropriate.

See comment 5.

- o A great majority of the data used in the study is self-reported. While we appreciate that GAO attempted to resolve data problems with this approach, it is our experience that there are limitations to this data, particularly some of the financial information.

See comment 6.

- o GAO includes all resources reported by grantees as available for the current period; however, it is virtually certain that a portion of these resources will not be used, particularly as the number of Members decline through attrition. Although GAO adjusted the amounts shown for Corporation funds as a result of this phenomena, there was no comparable adjustment for other Federal, State and local, or private funds. We believe that consistent treatment justifies adjustments in these categories as well.

See comment 7.

- o The methodology groups resources from a variety of sources under a category labeled "State and local" that is distinguished from private resources. As the Report notes, it is not clear that all of these resources are truly from public sources.

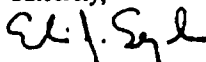
#### Conclusion

In summary, we believe that this Report should be understood as providing additional information about AmeriCorps during its start-up year; corroborating estimates of the resources available per Member from the Corporation and other federal agencies; having limitations that prevent it from being a cost benefit analysis or program evaluation; and recognizing strong private and public support for AmeriCorps at the state and local level -- a fact that we regard as a benefit and not a cost, despite what some may interpret from this study. There is no question but that this process has been useful in helping the Corporation focus on the complexities of this kind of analysis, and I am confident that we will be able to put the lessons learned to good use. And despite the concerns expressed herein, we are also appreciative of the professionalism and even-handedness of the GAO team.

We circulated your draft Report to those projects described in appendices IV and V therein. A number of those projects chose to provide us with comments on the Report. In an enclosure to this letter, I have included some of those comments which would help the reader better understand the Report and the views we have provided above.

Thank you for considering these comments in preparing the final report.

Sincerely,



Eli J. Segal  
Chief Executive Officer

[Enclosure reflects programs' selected comments regarding the Report]

The Washington Conservation Corps

See comment 3.

The cost per participant in the Report in the categories of "resources per service hour" and "resources per direct service hour" are misleading. The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) is a full 12 month program, based on 2,080 available hours of work per year versus 1,700 hours. In addition, our program spends no more than 10% of work time for a one year period in formal training. Informal training is provided on the job, but actual work is being accomplished.

The GAO report cites a WCC team that was "employed" by a large private corporation" to do "work" on its land. Watershed restoration is the primary direct service objective of the WCC, a state competitive grantee for which the Corporation provides education awards only. The program meets its stated objectives by addressing the comprehensive needs of the entire watershed. This can only be accomplished by involving both public and private land owners in correcting the accumulated damage that impacts the entire watershed.

The "large private corporation" referred to in the report is the Weyerhaeuser Company, one of the largest timber companies in the Pacific Northwest. Some of Weyerhaeuser land holdings are part of watersheds that border public lands. Weyerhaeuser asked the Washington Conservation Corps to make improvements to their part of the watershed, as an integral part of a comprehensive watershed restoration plan developed by landowners, both public and private, for the watershed.

This watershed restoration project is short-term and virtually complete. The Weyerhaeuser Company fulfilled its obligation to the community's overall restoration plan by engaging and compensating one team of the WCC for this project (no AmeriCorps grant funds were used on this project). Once complete, the restoration project will prove to be a benefit to the community at large.

See comment 3.

The Washington Service Corps

AmeriCorps Members and projects are able to leverage the additional resources of non-participant volunteers. In the first 3 quarters of this AmeriCorps project, 75,178 hours of volunteer time were contributed by individuals who are not enrolled in the AmeriCorps program but were mobilized because of the AmeriCorps activities. This service equals the amount generated by another 44 AmeriCorps Members.

Also, WSC members average 1,826 hours per term rather than the 1,700 hours used in GAO's calculation.

Below are our responses to specific points raised by the Corporation in its comments.

1. The Corporation raised concerns about our including private cash contributions, in-kind resources, and any state or local government resources in our calculations because in its view these resources represent benefits, not an additional cost to the federal government. Our objective, however, as clearly stated in the report, was not to identify what is or is not a cost or benefit but rather to identify the various resources available to AmeriCorps\*USA programs, including all nonfederal funds and other support.

In the report, we categorized all resources by their sources. For example, those resources provided by nongovernment sources were labeled as private cash and in-kind contributions. Similarly, in-kind contributions from all levels of government were identified separately from cash contributions. These resources, which are permitted to be counted toward the programs' required match, included such things as salaries of federal agency personnel who monitored AmeriCorps\*USA programs and administered grants, state natural resource managers' time to supervise participants, and uniforms provided by a local police department. By including these contributions, we were recognizing that they represent resources available to the programs—resources on which those programs depend.

2. The Corporation noted that in our calculations we assumed all participants will use their full education awards. We included the full education award amount as resources available because the Congress appropriates funds specifically for this purpose and funds are held in trust and available to those who earn them for 7 years. Interestingly, in calculating its own cost estimates, the Corporation used the full education award amount, too. Even if we had wanted to predict actual education award usage, there was insufficient experience with the program to date to do so, as the Corporation noted in its response.

3. The Corporation raised three concerns with the methodology we used to develop a calculation of resources per direct service hour: (1) we used the minimum required service hours—1,700 hours; (2) we reduced the 1,700-service-hour figure by 20 percent in calculating direct service hours; and (3) we did not include service hours worked by related but uncompensated volunteers.

We used the 1,700-hour figure because it was the minimum established by law and participants were only required to attain it, not exceed it. Although at the time of our site visits comprehensive data were not available on completed service hours, the data we were able to collect on participants indicated that while some would exceed the required 1,700 hours, many others would need to put in extra hours to meet the requirement. Regarding the specific information the Corporation provided on the Washington Service Corps in an enclosure to its letter, the average of more than 1,800 hours worked may represent the experience only of early completers. As we stated in the report (see p. 9), early information on those completing the program may not be indicative of results of programs that are still under way. Information from our site visits indicated that when considering all participants, it is likely the average will be closer to 1,700 hours.

We reduced total service hours by 20 percent in calculating direct service hours because the Corporation allows programs to allocate that amount of time to education, training, or similar activities. Several programs we visited were on track to spend 20 percent of their service time on such activities. Recognizing that the Corporation does not yet have actual data on the portion of time spent on nondirect service, we used the allowed amount in our calculations. In calculating resources per direct service hour, we included all resources, including those used on nondirect activities such as training, because those activities are an integral part of the program and required by legislation. The Corporation, in its comments, also recognized that nondirect service is a required part of the program. It follows that resources spent on nondirect service need to be included when analyzing resources per direct service hour. At the specific program the Corporation mentioned as devoting less than 20 percent of participants' time to nondirect service (the Washington Conservation Corps), formal training was expected to be about 10 percent of the required hours. However, that figure does not include additional informal training at worksites.

In our calculations of resources per service hour, we did not include, as the Corporation suggested we should, hours worked by uncompensated volunteers who were not AmeriCorps\*USA participants. Because our objective was to identify the resources needed to field an AmeriCorps\*USA participant, including hours of service generated by other volunteers was not relevant. It should be noted that the Corporation in its own estimates of cost per participant did not include such volunteers.



4. The Corporation expressed concern that our estimate of \$31,000 in available resources per participant at federal agency grantee programs was higher than its estimates. The Corporation suggested that our calculations did not discount resources for participant attrition. It provided data to us that showed an estimate of \$27,600 per participant calculated by using programs' budgeted resources and expected numbers of participants—data it obtained from grant files. Unlike the Corporation's estimate, ours was based on resources programs were certain to receive and actual numbers of participants that programs reported about halfway through the program year; we did adjust our estimate for participant attrition. Because the Corporation used expected participants, a higher figure than the actual number, its resources-per-participant figure was lower than ours. The example the Corporation presented (which it identified as the Vermont Anti-Hunger AmeriCorps program but whose figures related to the Vermont Youth Corps - National Service Academy program) indicated that the grantee, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), will reduce the resources it contributes to the program to reflect attrition. However, Youth Corps officials reported to us in June 1995 and confirmed in July 1995 that they expected to receive the full \$450,000 in cash from USDA despite attrition.

5. The Corporation expressed several methodological concerns: (1) that many of the data we used were self-reported, (2) that programs may have overstated the resources they hoped to raise, and (3) that we "expensed" start-up costs and capital costs in the first year. As to the first point, we used the only data available—those which we obtained from the programs themselves—because the Corporation did not have reliable data available. As to the second point, the data programs reported do not appear to be overestimated. In fact, the amount of non-Corporation resources the programs we sampled told us they expected to actually receive for the program year totaled only about 93 percent of the resources these programs' grant applications indicated that they would raise. As to the third point, in our report, we clearly stated why we chose to treat start-up costs as we did (see p. 8). Interestingly, the Corporation in its cost estimates included all expenses programs were expected to incur in the first year—including start-up costs—without allocating them over future periods.

6. The Corporation also was concerned about our inclusion of all resources available to programs when some may not be used and suggested that we should adjust the non-Corporation resources for participant attrition. We disagreed. We obtained our information in

May 1995, late enough in the programs' operating year for them to predict available resources and participant levels. (In contrast, the Corporation's funding was committed to the programs at the start of the operating year before any participation rates were known; therefore, we chose to adjust the amount of these funds.)

7. The Corporation stated that it is not certain that all of the resources in the "state and local" category are from public sources. Evidence we obtained showed that about 90 percent of the resources were clearly from public sources; the remaining 10 percent were from public postsecondary institutions. Given the reliance of public postsecondary institutions on public support, it was therefore appropriate in our view to categorize the resources they contributed to AmeriCorps\*USA programs as public. In any event, our sensitivity analysis showed that categorizing resources from public postsecondary institutions as private resources had very little impact on our estimate (see app. III).

# GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

---

## GAO Contacts

Wayne B. Upshaw, Assistant Director, (202) 512-7006  
Carol L. Patey, Project Manager, (617) 565-7575

---

## Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, the following individuals made important contributions to this report: C. Jeff Appel, Nancy K. Kintner-Meyer, and James W. Spaulding assisted in collecting and analyzing the data and writing the report; Jill W. Schamberger helped administer the data collection instrument; Susan C. Donna verified site visit information; Edmund L. Kelley helped conduct site visits; Lena G. Bartoli wrote computer programs to aid in our analysis; Steven R. Machlin performed statistical analyses and provided methodological advice on sampling errors; and Leslie D. Albin did the editing.

### Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

#### Orders by mail:

U.S. General Accounting Office  
P.O. Box 6015  
Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015

#### or visit:

Room 1100  
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000 or by using fax number (301) 258-4066, or TDD (301) 413-0006.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly available reports and testimony. To receive facsimile copies of the daily list or any list from the past 30 days, please call (301) 258-4097 using a touchtone phone. A recorded menu will provide information on how to obtain these lists.

For information on how to access GAO reports on the INTERNET, send an e-mail message with "info" in the body to:

[info@www.gao.gov](mailto:info@www.gao.gov)

United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Bulk Mail  
Postage & Fees Paid  
GAO  
Permit No. G100

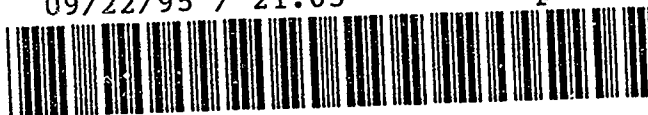
Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

Address Correction Requested

SHIP TO:  
GAIL MATHEWS  
1301 PICCARD DR. S-300  
ROCKVILLE MD 208504305

Request # 3492725 31 3

09/22/95 / 11:43 m  
09/22/95 / 21:05 p



3492725011p205  
Item Document Number  
1 HEHS-95-222